

THE HISTORIC VIEWS OF THE CHURCH CONCERNING PRESERVATION

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## ***LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS***

<i>DBSJ</i>	<i>Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal</i>
KJV	King James Version
CT	Critical Text
MT	Majority Text
TR	<i>Textus Receptus</i>
WCF	Westminster Confession of Faith

## INTRODUCTION

The battle for the Word of God is not a new battle. Today, while many of its most vitriolic opponents are in the grave, and the volumes written to discredit it and to overthrow its influence, are forgotten, the Bible has found its way into every major nation and over 2,000 languages of the planet. As Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote, “It is not such a book as man would write if he *could*, or could write if he *would*<sup>1</sup>.” The fact that this book has survived so many centuries, notwithstanding such unparalleled efforts to destroy it by imperial and papal Rome as well as apostate textual criticism, is strong evidence that God Almighty its Author has also been its Preserver.

The Bible did not appear from a vacuum but was inspired and preserved under the Sovereign control of Almighty God. This includes all natural processes and agencies through which these inspired Words were enscripturated and passed down through the ages. Only God could have inspired Moses to inerrantly record 2,500 years of human history unaided. The Bible has been preserved against all odds, both in its canonicity and in the purity of its contents. Indeed on the two times we are told that the Lord wrote He used the “finger of God” and, in the first instance, He committed it in stone no doubt to illustrate the infallibility, inerrancy, and indestructibility of His Words (Exod.31:18; John 8:6). This was despite there being various forms of writing material already available, but the stone represents a permanent quality that cannot be erased or modified (Matt. 7:24). God reveals that the Bible is classed with a very few realities which will endure forever (Matt 5:18). God also made clear that we are to be “mindful always of his covenant; the word *which* he commanded to a thousand

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 1, (Kregel, Grand Rapids, 1947-48), 22.

generations” (1Chron 16:15). Eternal endurance is promised to the Bible, as it truly is the Indestructible Book.

It is startling the confusion Satan has sown worldwide through liberalism, higher criticism, cults, and false religions, especially in the last one hundred years on the infallible nature of Holy Scripture. This has been especially notable since the advent of the printing presses and the ubiquitous availability of the complete Bible to all since our beloved King James translation in 1611. The church has historically held fast to the Word, not only as given by divine inspiration but also as preserved throughout the ages. However, a new view has crept into the Church, which has relegated the authentic text to the autograph originals only. Until the eighteenth century challenge of evolution by scientific rationalism, the almost universal view of the Christian world was that the Earth was only a few thousand years old. Likewise, the Church held to the historic doctrine of the perfect inspiration and preservation of the Words of God in all ages until challenged by rational textual criticism.

Historic Fundamentalism may be moving away from these doctrines, but this not the historic position of believers and the Reformation. This new view is around 100-150 years old, like the age of the Charismatic movement, rejection of *ex nihilo* creation, and the critical text. Charles Hodge pertinently observed, “It would be a lamentable spectacle to see the Church changing its doctrines or its interpretations of Scripture, to suit the constantly changing representations of scientific men as to matters of fact<sup>2</sup>.” Probably the greatest sign of the decline of the Church has been the attack on the doctrine of Scriptural Preservation and the King James Version in the postmodern *zeitgeist*. Rome, along with post-Enlightenment thought, has now captured even

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871, reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 1:57.

Fundamentalism, at least concerning the Greek New Testament texts. However, giants of the past like Dean Burgon state the historic position,

I am utterly disinclined to believe, so grossly improbable does it seem — that at the end of 1800 years, 995 copies out of every thousand, I suppose, will prove untrustworthy, and that one, two, three, four, or five which remain, whose contents were till yesterday as good as unknown, will be found to have the secret of what the Holy Spirit originally inspired. I am utterly unable to believe, in short, that God's promise has so entirely failed, that at the end of 1800 years, much of the text of the Gospel had in point of fact to be picked by a German critic out of a waste paper basket in the convent of St. Catherine.

The intellectual and preaching giant, C.H. Spurgeon also declared the Authorized Version “will never be bettered, as I judge, till Christ shall come<sup>3</sup>” but his opinion is swept aside by the new generation of Fundamentalists. Critical Text (CT) advocates have no ultimate and certain standard for determining objective truth. Fortunately, most CT advocates of the past were better believers than theologians and have been able to live with the inherent contradiction of their system by simply declaring the gospel from the Received Text. This has now been challenged by the belligerent approach of the new breed of CT adherents and multiplication of translations and the latest edition of the evolutionary Greek Text.

The annual Congress on Fundamentalism held at Tabernacle Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia, on October 22-29, 1978 passed the following resolution signed by FBF President Dr Rod Bell, Dr Gilbert Stenholm of BJU, Dr. Arno Weniger, Jnr. of Maranatha Baptist Bible College, Dr Ian Paisley, and Dr Bob Jones Jr.,

That we recommend the use and distribution of only the King James Version of the Bible in English and only those foreign language versions and translations which

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<sup>3</sup> An excerpt from “The Last Words of Christ on the Cross,” a sermon on Luke 23:46; Psalm 31:5; and Acts 7:59 preached at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, on Sunday evening, June 25, 1882.

have been faithfully translated by those committed to the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scripture<sup>4</sup>.

The Fundamental Baptist Fellowship (FBF) used to stand unequivocally against all Bible versions produced by liberals. In their 1984 Resolutions they state,

We condemn paraphrases such as The Living Bible and Good News for Modern Man and the products of unbelieving and liberal scholarship such as the Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible.

We deplore the rash of new versions which add to or delete from the Word of God, such as the New International Version, with special reference to those so-called “revisions” which by footnote additions undermine the text.

We recognize the unique and special place of the Authorized King James Version, providentially preserved by God in the English-speaking world<sup>5</sup>.

The one consistent trend in all the varied errors, deviations and heresies that has afflicted the Church in the past three hundred years is that their advocates will first criticize the standard received edition or translation of Scripture. The Institutional Church has now publicly given up on having an agreed “text” of the Scriptures and attacks on the historic view of perfect preservation and the KJV are now common place. Even professed Fundamentalists take great pride today in fervently arguing that God did not perfectly preserve His Words, leaving us with an uncertain errant text. The logic of this is that God failed to guide His people to know and keep His words and failed to make it available for all generations, despite what He promised to do. They argue for “essential preservation” but the word “essential” means only pertaining to or constituting the essence of a thing. Tolerance is the cry for all views on this issue yet we

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<sup>4</sup> The resolutions were drawn up by a Committee consisting of Dr. Rod Bell, Chairman; Rev. Homer Massey, Secretary; Rev. Charles Anderson, Dr. Allen Dickerson, Dr. Gilbert Stenholm, Dr. Carl Bieber, Rev. Bill Williams, Mr. Dennis Pegrom, Dr. John McCormick, Dr. Arno Weniger, Jr., Dr. James Zaspel, Dr. Ian Paisley, Dr. Bob Jones, and Dr. Ed. Nelson. It is set forth in the *Revivalist* December 1970 online at <http://www.ianpaisley.org/revivalist/1978/Rev78dec.htm> accessed 21 February 2009.

<sup>5</sup> 1984 FBF Resolutions adopted at Maranatha Bible College on June 12-14, 1984 online at <http://www.fbf.org/content/view/20/22/> accessed 21 February 2009. Interestingly, one of those signing this resolution was J. B. Williams who later edited *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*, (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999).

forget that Christ rebuked a Church for tolerating a Jezebel in its midst. Tragically, the Church is being destroyed from within as Cicero Marcus Tullius, born on 3 January, 106 BC and murdered on 7 December, warned of a nation in 43 BC in the Roman Senate,

A nation can survive its fools, and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and carries his banner openly. But the traitor moves amongst those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself. For the traitor appears not a traitor; he speaks in accents familiar to his victims, and he wears their face and their arguments, he appeals to the baseness that lies deep in the hearts of all men. He rots the soul of a nation, he works secretly and unknown in the night to undermine the pillars of the city, he infects the body politic so that it can no longer resist. A murderer is less to fear<sup>6</sup>.

Speaking of God and the preservation of Scripture, Central Baptist Theological Seminary President, Kevin Bauder<sup>7</sup> tries to argue the Lord is indifferent as to His Words as Bauder claims, “He might preserve some words and He might permit some to be lost, depending upon His own purpose<sup>8</sup>.” BJU professor, Stewart Custer speaking at Marquette Manor Baptist Church in Chicago in 1984 said that God preserved His Word buried, “in the sands of Egypt<sup>9</sup>.” Larry Oats of Maranatha Baptist College in Wisconsin, an institution under Dr Myron Cedarholm that formerly argued

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<sup>6</sup> Cited in Barbara O'Brien, *Blogging America: Political Discourse in a Digital Nation*, (New York: Franklin, Beedle & Associates, Inc., 2004), 157.

<sup>7</sup> Like many of the Central Baptist faculty, Kevin Bauder received graduate training at a Neo-Evangelical Seminary that is strongly opposed to the KJV.

<sup>8</sup> Kevin Bauder, *One Bible Only? Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 159-160.

<sup>9</sup> Jack Moorman, *Forever Settled*, (New Jersey: Bible For Today, 1985) 90-95.



for the fact of the preserved Word of God in the King James Version<sup>10</sup>, claims, “God could have preserved His Word but history proves He did not<sup>11</sup>.” William D. Barrick of The Master’s Seminary argues,

Traditionally the church has declared its belief that the preservation of the Scriptures is the result of God’s providential activity. God must have a role in the preservation of His Word if it is to be kept inviolate. The active preservation of the Scriptures is necessary because the sinful nature of mankind is antagonistic to God and His Word. Such antagonism breeds both contempt for Scripture and the neglect of Scripture. It is fully within the capacity of sinful mankind to allow the Word to perish and to alter its wording intentionally or unintentionally<sup>12</sup>.

But he then paradoxically concludes, “The responsibility for preservation in this world rests squarely upon human shoulders<sup>13</sup>.”

Paul W. Downey of Temple Baptist Church writing in *God’s Word in Our Hands* claims, like the Neo-Orthodox, “God’s Word transcends written documents, even the physical universe, and will be completely and ultimately fulfilled if not one copy remains. The power and effectiveness and duration of the Word of God, and man’s responsibility to obey it, do not demand the presence or even the existence of any physical copy.” Downey also wrote, “The essential message of Scripture has been preserved not only in the Byzantine text-type, but in the Alexandrian text-type as

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<sup>10</sup> Kent Brandenburg on his blog writes, “When I was a senior in high school, Maranatha had the very first *Dean Burgon Society* meeting with Dr. Donald Waite and Dr. David Otis Fuller. Two of the faculty, Dr. Strouse and Dr. Hollowood, were on the board of the society. Maranatha herself published two books in its history, the first a two volume set of Armitage’s *History of Baptists*, and the second a little green and yellow paperback that was a comparison of the King James Version with the modern versions, *Evaluating of NT Versions*, by Everett Fowler, of which Dr. Cedarholm wrote a strong TR/MT introduction.” online at <http://kentbrandenburg.blogspot.com/2006/06/what-do-you-think.html> accessed 20 February 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Marion H. Reynolds, Jr., “Dangerous Misconceptions Concerning Satan,” *Foundation Magazine* (May-June 1996), Editorial.

<sup>12</sup> William D. Barrick, *TMSJ* 9/1 (Spring 1998): 27.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

well; the K.J.V. is the Word of God as well as the NASB<sup>14</sup>.” Later he writes, “Some among us believe the Bible makes no direct promise of its own preservation, that it only implies it by inference<sup>15</sup>.” With tongue firmly in cheek, Bob Jones, III (then President of Bob Jones University) on the back cover of the same publication writes concerning the thrill of knowing we have just the general concepts or message from God today,

Like a clean-edged sword, God’s Word in our Hands cuts through the current confused and schismatic clatter on the subject of biblical preservation. These conservatives and God-fearing authors do the church great service by presenting us with soul-thrilling evidence of the reliability and durability of the eternal Word.

However, as Dr D A Waite writes in reviewing *God’s Word in Our Hands*, “There are over 5,255 manuscripts. If God’s “Word” is “in our hands,” how can it be both “in our hands” and also all over the world in these 5,255 manuscripts? That is impossible<sup>16</sup>.” It is little wonder with such men in leadership in Fundamental schools and churches that God gave His prophets the warning of a famine of God’s Words in the last days (Amos 8:11).

#### RIDICULE OF PERFECT PRESERVATION

To stand for perfect preservation is arrogantly dismissed as adopting the Bible’s faith-view in order to escape from the “fact” that textual criticism has shown that God did not preserve all of His Words and make them generally available in every generation. These truculent critics ridicule anyone who exalts the authority of the written Word over the authority of liberal “scholarship.” Many adopt the methodology

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<sup>14</sup> James B. Williams ed., *God’s Word in Our Hands: The Bible Preserved for Us* (Greenville: Ambassador Emerald International, 2003), 376-377.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 390.

<sup>16</sup> D. A. Waite, “Fundamentalists Battle Bible Preservation,” online at [http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/PDF/BFT\\_3287.pdf](http://www.deanburgonsociety.org/PDF/BFT_3287.pdf) accessed 20 February 2009.

of the evolutionists who figured that the best way to insulate their doctrines from scrutiny is to prevent a debate from ever beginning in the first place by ridiculing your opponents as “fideistic” and demanding that “religious presuppositional” views must not mix with “science.” CT advocates refuse to disclose their presuppositions since they are aware that revealing the bases for the radical beliefs will make their arguments vulnerable to a Biblical challenge. Their books have verbose theological presuppositions to account for canonicity and inspiration of the Words of Scripture but are strangely silent concerning preservation. They adopt the same rationalistic accommodation with “science” as Davis Young in *The Biblical Flood* where he rejects the historic interpretation of the Universal Flood by arguing,

As we have seen, the idea of a universal deluge was the settled interpretation of the church for nearly seventeen centuries, but that has changed as a body of compelling evidence undercutting that interpretation gradually accumulated. The cumulative pressure of general revelation can be ignored for only so long<sup>17</sup>.

In a summary response to Young’s theories, Marvin Lubenow correctly retreats to the orthodox Biblical presuppositional literal hermeneutic,

Davis Young is correct in saying that harmonization based on the old earth-old Adam position has failed. Because he does not recognize that his data has been placed in a philosophic framework alien to Genesis, he has nowhere else to go. He is suggesting that “...the Bible may be expressing history in nonfactual terms...” There is a name for nonfactual history: fiction. However, Young clearly does not intend to imply that. Hence, his words convey no information. We see the frustrations of a man who is utterly sincere in wanting to maintain biblical integrity but is unable to extricate himself from, the man-made philosophic framework of earth history<sup>18</sup>.

These textual critics are removing the “ancient landmarks” concerning preservation and replacing them with a rationalistic system of logic. Although they cry

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<sup>17</sup> Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood: Case Study of the Church’s Response to Extra-biblical Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 309.

<sup>18</sup> Marvin Lubenow, *Bones of Contention* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 234.

“fideistic presupposition” at us, we may point out that they are presupposing that God has not done what He promised to do with unbiblical and revisionist logic. Their fideism is not in God, but in man through a supposedly neutral, scholarly, and scientific means to restore as closely as possible to what the original text of the Bible was. They are effectively removing the concept of Divine revelation, as an operative concept, from Christian epistemology. It is ironic that one side of the debate is unfairly accused of engaging in fideism, when the reality is that both sides are working from the same fundamental conviction. However, we must always draw our conclusions about the evidence by means of the presuppositions. Presuppositions are not disconnected from evidence, but the interpretation of the evidence must always come from the presuppositions.

A typical statement is that of Gerald Priest, Professor of Historical Theology at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary,

Many “evangelical” heresies are simply the old ones with new names, e.g., Open Theism, a form of Pelagianism (Clark Pinnock, Greg Boyd); Man-centered soteriology, a form of Semi-Pelagianism (Charles Finney, Dave Hunt); Self-esteemism, a form of Gnosticism (Robert Schuller), Annihilationism, a form of Socinianism (Clark Pinnock, John Stott) and King James-onlyism, a relatively new heresy in response to numerous Bible versions (Peter Ruckman, Donald Waite, David Cloud), to name a few<sup>19</sup>.

This view has become so pervasive in fundamentalism that it is perhaps the most divisive issue in the history of the movement. Concerned fundamentalist theologians and pastors have been offering correctives but leading proponents of KJV-onlyism have remained unconvinced and obdurate<sup>20</sup>.

One *ad hominem* tactic these groups use is to label you a “Ruckmanite.” However, as one TR defender once observed, “A Ruckmanite is what the opponents call you when

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<sup>19</sup> Gerald L. Priest, “Early Fundamentalism’s Legacy: What Is It and Will It Endure Through the 21st Century?,” *DBSJ* 9 (Fall 2004): 317.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 342.

they are losing the argument.” Another old canard tactic, opponents such as Doug Kutilek, utilise is to say that your belief in preservation is rooted in the thinking of Benjamin Wilkinson, who was a Seventh Day Adventist and published *Our Authorized Bible Vindicated* in 1930<sup>21</sup>. However, these anti-KJV opponents do not acknowledge that their view is derived from the work of two apostate Anglican scholars and that Wilkinson’s views were rejected by the Adventists who embrace fully the critical theories of Westcott and Hort. Leading Neo-Evangelical critic of the TR, James R. White warns that King James Bible proponents, “undercut the very foundations of the faith itself<sup>22</sup>.” BJU Board Member and Fundamentalist Baptist Pastor, Mike Harding also scoffs,

KJV Onlyism is the greatest embarrassment to historic Fundamentalism that I know. It shows how intellectually bankrupt and dishonest some aspects of Fundamentalism really are. It is laughable if it were not so serious in its consequences<sup>23</sup>.

William Combs of the Fundamentalist Detroit Baptist Seminary also attacks preachers, such as Dr. Ian Paisley, who stand for perfect preservation, by citing their beliefs in a condescending way,

[David] Cloud says: “I believe the King James Bible is an accurate and lovely translation of the preserved Greek and Hebrew text of Scripture. I do not believe the King James Bible contains any errors.” In like manner, Thomas Strouse writes: “The KJV is the Word of God in the English language. It has no errors in it because it carefully reflects the original language texts closest to the autographa.” Ian Paisley agrees: “I believe the Authorised Version preserves the Word of God for me

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<sup>21</sup> Doug Kutilek, “The Unlearned Men: The True Genealogy and Genesis of King-James-Version-Onlyism” online at [http://www.kjvonly.org/doug/kutilek\\_unlearned\\_men.htm](http://www.kjvonly.org/doug/kutilek_unlearned_men.htm) accessed on 5 February 2009.

<sup>22</sup> James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), Introduction, VII.

<sup>23</sup> See Mike Harding’s comments on forum entry online at <http://www.sharperiron.org/showpost.php?p=107862&postcount=125> accessed on 24 November 2008.

in the English tongue and that it contains no errors.” Although many of those in the KJV/TR camp refrain from using language associated with the original inspiration of the Scriptures, some are not so guarded. Paisley argues: “There is no such thing as verbal Revelation without verbal Inspiration and there is no such thing as verbal Inspiration without verbal Preservation. In all cases it is not partial but plenary i.e. full, complete, perfect<sup>24</sup>.”

Combs boldly asserts, “The Bible does not teach its own perfect preservation, and it is a serious error to claim otherwise<sup>25</sup>.” The attack by so-called Fundamentalists against KJV proponents is nothing new. Basil Manly wrote in his classic work *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration* in 1888, “There is even now, with some ignorant persons, an assumption of the infallibility and equality with the original of some particular translation, as the Vulgate, or King James, or Luther’s<sup>26</sup>.”

If modern Fundamentalists posit a view on preservation it is usually a nebulous and unchallengeable position of the “non-preserved preservation” view that God has preserved His Word through the totality of all extant Greek and Hebrew manuscripts that we have. However, such advocates never point to a complete compilation of all extant manuscripts that we have resulting in the fact that we can never be sure that we have the complete Word of God. Dan Wallace claimed in 2008 that there are at least “as many as another 1000 Greek New Testament manuscripts yet to be discovered<sup>27</sup>.” Some inconsistently mock those who believe in perfect preservation as “heretical” as they claim it is unreasonable and amounts to re-

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<sup>24</sup>William Combs, “The Preservation of Scripture,” *DBSJ* 5(Fall 2000): 31.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid*, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Basil Manly, *The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration*, (New York: AC Armstrong and Sons, 1888), 84.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Daniel Wallace cited in “Q & A: Daniel Wallace,” *Christianity Today* (April 2008) online at <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2008/aprilweb-only/117-32.0.html> accessed 10 February 2009.

inspiration, yet they claim that 90-98% purity of the text is down to God's supernatural providence. However, both processes require the same miracle of God's magnificent providence.

Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary (DBTS) decide to comfort the saints of God by openly stating, "We do not hold that the Word of God is to be found exclusively in one English translation or any one translation in any other language since all such have mistranslations, miscopying, or misprinting, however minor, and are not therefore inerrant<sup>28</sup>." They also say, "We therefore hold that the integrity of any text, text type, translation, version, or copy of the Scriptures is to be judged by the autographs only and not by an English translation or any other reproduction or translation." This is a nonsensical position as we do not have the autographs, so it is impossible for "the integrity of a text, text type, translation, version, or copy" to be "judged by the autographs," and it is fallacious to say that they are so judged. For instance, how can the Critical Text or the Textus Receptus be judged by an autograph that does not exist? No doubt DBTS will argue that there are modernist experts who can determine which manuscripts are closest. However, as the logical conclusions of guilty man on spiritual matters *will always be in error* they need to explain what makes a modernist an expert on something that does not exist? The truth is that every believer using Biblical theological or philosophical presuppositions is led to some conclusion as to the content of the original autographs. That is the only logical and honest position rather than this absurd semantic gyration. Most CT advocates sound like the average freshman College student that has just failed his introductory logic courses rather than a serious theologian. They delineate the depths into the sea of absurdity that those who

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<sup>28</sup>William Combs, "Errors in the King James Version" *DBSJ* 4 (Fall 1999): 152.

reject the Biblical presuppositional approach will go rather than face up to the biblically obvious.

DBTS also say “We acknowledge the right of all Christians to study the manuscript evidence regarding the text of Scripture and to come to a preference for a text, text type, translation, or version....We do not grant the legitimacy of regarding one text, text type, or translation as the very Word of God to the exclusion of all others.” Their argument is that they grant all believers the right to study this issue but only to the extent that they come to a preference, but not to a firm conviction on this matter. What Scriptural right have they to make this claim? They go on to maintain, “In light of the considerable discussion and controversy among fundamentalists about versions, translation theories, manuscripts, texts, and text types, we hold that no particular beliefs about the best textual and translation theories should be elevated to the place of core fundamentalist beliefs or articles of distinctively fundamentalist faith.” The irony in all of this is that, like the secular pluralists, DBTS deny us a right to hold our view of preservation as a distinctive belief but then demand we accept their belief of no confidence or certainty that the multi-text only view is the only legitimate view. They refuses to receive the Scriptures as they exist in history, but demands that they have the right and authority to reconstruct and impose their own makings upon us; accepting nothing as authentic or genuine, but only their own opinions.

DBTS boldly assert that it is illegitimate is to take a distinctive view, yet do exactly the same thing to which they are objecting by a juxtaposition of non-exclusion and exclusion. They attempt to claim the supposed moral high ground by saying that it is wrong to preclude other possible views by then doing exactly that - precluding other views. It is a similar logic to the Neo-Evangelicals who reject separation and then want



to separate from the separationist Fundamentalists! Does the Bible give a foundation for the belief that a firm conviction on the text is illegitimate or do we have to turn to DBTS to tell us what is and isn't legitimate? In this DBTS statement we see the assertion of uncertainty, the emphasis on man and his ability to rationally observe and scientifically judge the revealed truth of Scripture, and the arrogant intolerance of any certitude and disagreement with them on preservation. Without the Biblical doctrine of preservation, we are left with non-answers in these areas. Another irony is that DBTS has such certainty about what God has not said in the face of what He has said on perfect preservation. To the naive observer, DBTS may appear to be simply making minor changes in the interpretation of the Biblical text. However, what they really are doing is converting completely over from a biblical historical framework to a naturalistic one. These DBTS scholars need correcting for when theologically educated men make absurd statements they are no less absurd than when the lay person make them. We reject their arguments because they are fundamentally illogical, and believers should not utilise unsound arguments nor appeal to unbelievers to place their confidence in them. Despite their bombastic approach, DBTS are like the rhetorician in the story who wrote in the margin of his notes, "Argument weak. Shout here."

Myron J. Houghton, professor in the Theology Department of Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, also engages in the same logical fallacies,

I believe God verbally inspired the original manuscripts of Scripture without error and without omission, but I also believe He has preserved His Word through manuscripts that have some differences. I do not always know which reading reflects the original wording of a passage, but I do know that all of these readings reflect doctrine taught somewhere in the Bible and that none of these differences

change what God's Word teaches. I can trust the Bible in my hands to be the Word of God<sup>29</sup>.

Central Baptist Seminary Professor, Edward Glenny concurs with this “work in progress” text,

In our defense and propagation of the faith the key issue is not whether today we know the precise form of the words recorded in the autographa. To make that our focus moves us away from God to concentrate on the process...The key issue is that God has spoken in the autographa and He has spoken with authority and without error and we are responsible to respond to Him<sup>30</sup>.

Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth could not have put it any better! However, the message was in the Words; there is no message apart from the Words and there is no inspiration apart from the Words. Textual criticism has been fruitlessly seeking a perfect text by correcting the “errors” in the TR and after 350 years of making “corrections,” they candidly confess they have not realized their goal and cannot. This uncertain “certainty” position of modern Fundamentalism is in marked contrast to what the Lord spoke through Solomon about the inspired words, “Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?” (Prov 22:20-21). Luke penned a two volume, fifty-two chapter history of the life of Christ and the first thirty years of the church, which had more words than all of Paul’s epistles, and he expressly stated it was for the purpose, “That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (Luke 1:4).

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<sup>29</sup> Myron J. Houghton, “The Preservation of Scripture,” in *The Faith Pulpit* (August 1999) online at [http://www.faith.edu/seminary/faithpulpit.php?article=../faithpulpit/1999\\_08](http://www.faith.edu/seminary/faithpulpit.php?article=../faithpulpit/1999_08) accessed 2 April 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Glenny, “The Preservation of Scripture,” in ed. Michael Grisanti, *The Bible Version Debate*, (Minneapolis: Central Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997), 82.

In another article, Samuel Schnaiter of BJU critiques Wilbur Pickering's *Majority Text* position by making the deeply disturbing critical observation, "Finally, although Pickering has avoided an excessive reliance on theological presuppositions in his presentation, it is nevertheless clear that a theological presupposition essentially undergirds his entire purpose<sup>31</sup>." According to Schnaiter it is acceptable and even necessary to have theological presuppositions about the resurrection, but it is unacceptable to hold theological presuppositions about the historical sources that the belief in the resurrection is based upon. The ecumenist, Daniel Wallace of Dallas Theological Seminary concurs, "A theological *a priori* has no place in textual criticism<sup>32</sup>" and has also stated, "Evangelicals tend to allow their doctrinal convictions to guide their research. It is better to not the left hand know what the right hand is doing: methodologically, investigate with as objective a mind as possible, allowing the evidence to lead where it will<sup>33</sup>." Interestingly, Bishop Westcott rejected such an approach to studying the text, as he wrote to Hort, "I hardly feel with you on this question of discussing anything doctrinally or on doctrine. This seems to me to be wholly out of our province. We have only to determine what is written and how it can be rendered. Theologians may deal with the text and version afterwards<sup>34</sup>." Leading contemporary textual critic, Bart Ehrman also concludes,

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<sup>31</sup> Cited in "Textual Criticism and the Modern English Version Controversy," *Biblical Viewpoint*, Vol. XVI, No. 1 (April 1982): 72.

<sup>32</sup> "The Majority Text" by Daniel Wallace in Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 309.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel Wallace, "The Problem of Luke 2:2" online at [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=1146](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1146) accessed 25 March 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Arthur Westcott, *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, (London: Macmillan Co., 1903), 393.

The fact that Warfield and Burgon both affirmed a doctrine of general preservation, and yet held antithetical views of how the text was preserved suggests that the doctrine is inappropriately used in support of any particular view of the text's transmission history. Instead such affirmations can only be made subsequent to the assessment of the evidence for the progress of the history of transmission. The evidence must lead to the doctrine, not vice versa—else the doctrine will simply be adduced to support a certain set of historical conclusions<sup>35</sup>.

Such a statement shows the depth of rationalistic and unbiblical thought that is now prevalent in modern fundamentalism. For an experienced Seminary Professor like Schnaiter at a leading Fundamentalist school to implicitly reject both the existence and need of a Biblical pre-supposition concerning a Biblical doctrine is frankly astounding. Like the Deists, this view is premised on the belief that nature is the only light needed by man in his search for God and His truth. The same failure to renounce the intellectual autonomy of man outside the revealed promises of God was at the center of man's fall into sin. The Scriptures explicitly warn that man as a finite creature man is forbidden to test God's Word (Deut 6:16; Luke 4:12).

Nowhere in Scripture does God separate so-called "spiritual" truths from "secular" ones. By contrast, it is emphasized that "all wisdom and knowledge" is found in the revelation of Christ, who is God in the flesh. (Col 2:3) and God demands man to believe Him rather than judge the Bible according to their finite reason by appealing to their own "logic." The Psalmist makes it clear, "In thy light shall we see light" (Ps 36:9). Unbiblical pre-suppositions will therefore "oppose themselves" (2 Tim 2:25), as their fundamental beliefs will fail to properly integrate because of inherent contradictions. By rejecting the presuppositional approach, CT advocates interpret preservation promises in light of biblical criticism. This invariably opens the

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<sup>35</sup> Cited by Wilbur Pickering, from a copy sent to him personally by Bart D. Ehrman: "New Testament Textual Criticism: Search for Method," M.Div thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981, 44.

door to all biblical criticism, which can be witnessed in the lives of men like Bart Ehrman who correctly observed that once you adopt naturalistic premises it is wholly consistent not to let it guide you on other doctrines such as inspiration, inerrancy etc.

## REFORMERS AND PRESERVATION

Martin Luther sparked the Reformation on three pillars: faith, grace and Scripture. The final pillar of *Sola Scriptura* predicated the Bible as the ultimate source of all authority available and was to be regarded as God's last Words to mankind. It effectively dethroned the infallible authority of the pope and the Church and enthroned the Bible. The Reformers were cognizant that the reason for the darkness of the Medieval Period was a result of the Roman Church losing sight of the true text in the original languages. They were also equally clear that the dissemination of the Received Text through the printed editions had sparked the Reformation and not the rise of nationalism, corruption in the Roman Church, or even the Renaissance. Since the autographs were not available the Reformers knew that we must have a reliable tradition or bridge of some sort which connects us to the original autographs. This bridge must be undergirded with faith in a God who controls the flow of all historical events through the true Church and not apostate autonomous textual critics. The Reformers looked to ecclesiastical consensus in textual issues in the same manner they had in Canonical, Trinitarian and Christological issues.

Rome claimed sacred status to the ecclesiastical editions of the Latin Vulgate, whereas Protestants by Biblical presuppositions ascribed sacred status to the ecclesiastical editions of the Greek New Testament of the Greek speaking Church and the Hebrew of the synagogues. However, both predicated their respective claims of authentic texts centered upon ecclesiastical editions that were historically sanctioned by ecclesiastical use. Reformation and post-Reformation dogma was predicated on the

doctrine of perfect preservation. The Reformers rejected Rome's tradition and its corrupted texts, and held fast to the Received Text readings, which they knew evoked the wrath of Satan and had triggered the great Protestant Reformation during which tens of thousands of true believers perished by flame, famine and torture. The Reformed arguments always proceeded from the theological principle to the empirical proofs; which has today been overthrown by textual criticism. Protestant theologians asserted in their confessions that the autographs and the apographs in the original languages were both inspired and preserved by God. Rome using a handful of copies in which numerous variants existed in an attempt to refute the principle of *Sola Scriptura*.

The Reformers were well aware of the corruptions of the texts of Alexandria and regarded the variant readings in the minority texts as either intentional or inadvertent corruptions. W.R. Farmer explains how the Alexandrian manuscripts were tainted by corruption, "But there is ample evidence that by the time of Eusebius the Alexandrian text-critical practices were being followed in at least some of the scriptoria where New Testament manuscripts were being produced. Exactly when Alexandrian text-critical principles were first used . . . is not known<sup>36</sup>." Calvin said of Origen,

Origen, and many others along with him, have seized the occasion of torturing Scripture, in every possible manner, away from the true sense. They concluded that the literal sense is too mean and poor, and that, under the outer bark of the letter, there lurk deeper mysteries, which cannot be extracted but by beating out allegories. And this they had no difficulty in accomplishing; for speculations which appear to be ingenious have always been preferred, and always will be preferred, by the world to solid doctrine<sup>37</sup>.

An important point to note was that the debate as it existed between Romanists and Protestants was over ultimate and infallible authority. The positing of

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<sup>36</sup> W.R. Farmer, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1974), 14-15. He cites B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, (1924), 111, 122-23.

<sup>37</sup> From Calvin's *Commentary on Galatians*, cited in Richard A. Muller, *Holy Scripture*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 471.

*Sola Scriptura* of the inspired Scripture was to assert subordination of the authority of the Church and its uninspired tradition. The Reformers did not regard the tradition of the true Church of having no role to play in receiving and recognising the true text and books. Therefore, this was not a simplistic argument of Scripture against non-Scripture, as Rome also affirmed the Bible was the inspired word of God. Rome's posited doctrine derived from the Vulgate interpreted through tradition. The Reformers attacked not just the tradition but the text that it was based within. For instance, Luther's initial challenge on Roman doctrine was on the textual issue that the Lord commands us to repent, not do penance. The Reformers, by contrast, had absolute faith in a God that has demonstrated that preservation is not a problem for Him (Jer 36).

As a consequence in this presupposition, the early Reformers trained their ministers in Latin, Greek and Hebrew to enable them to defend and exegete the Received Text and produce translations into the vernacular tongues. That is why their cry was *Sola Scriptura* and their Confessions such as the Westminster demanded that the text in these languages was the Supreme authority for their generation. So strictly did the Reformers see this issue of providential preservation through the "perpetual consensus of the Church universal" that in Geneva, Calvin refused to ordain a minister, Sebastian Castellio who, despite being orthodox in all other matters, rejected the Song of Solomon within the canon of Scripture<sup>38</sup>. Douglas Wilson explains why the witness of the Church to the Canon and the Text is theologically important,

This witness is not offered by the Church as "something to think about" or as a mere "suggestion." The testimony of the Church on this point is submissive to Scripture, but authoritative for the saints. For example, if an elder in a Christian church took it upon himself to add a book to the canon of Scripture, or sought to take away a book, the duty of his church would be to try him for heresy and remove

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<sup>38</sup> J. Greenslade ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol 3 (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 9.



him immediately. This disciplinary action is authoritative, taken in defense of an authoritative canonical settlement. This does not mean the Church is defending the Word of God; the Church is defending her witness to the Word. As the necessity of discipline makes plain, this witness is dogmatic and authoritative. It is not open for discussion. God does not intend for us to debate the canon of Scripture afresh every generation. We have already given our testimony; our duty now is to remain faithful to it<sup>39</sup>.

Commenting on Isaiah 59:21, Calvin affirmed his belief in the perfect preservation of all the Words of Scripture in every age in the true Church,

The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age who, *believing with the heart* unto righteousness, shall *with the tongue make confession unto salvation*. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church; for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up. For the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit does his work by the word and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firmly, and shall stand for ever, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

The seventeenth century Confessions focused in on the doctrine of providential preservation, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Helveticus Consensus Formula, as a direct response to the attack of the Council of Trent on the Received Text. The Council of Trent solemnly affirmed in the following words,

Moreover the same Sacred and holy Synod, considering that no small utility may accrue to the Church of God, if it be made known which out of all the Latin editions now in circulation of the Sacred Books is to be held as authentic, ordains and declares that the said old and Vulgate edition, which by the lengthened usage of so many ages has been approved of in the Church<sup>40</sup>.

The Reformers asserted as a counterpoint to the Vulgate that the Received Text was the “authentic” text, with the locus of Biblical authority being the apographs

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<sup>39</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Mother Kirk*, (Moscow: Canon Press, 2001), 53.

<sup>40</sup> J. Waterworth, *Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2003), 19.

not the Church. This was not from neutral science of textual criticism but in their presuppositional faith in the promises that God had preserved His Words for them. They knew that an inspired Bible that no one could see was no use to them, for as Calvin said on his commentary of 2 Peter 1: 19 that, “without the Word, there is nothing left but darkness.” Textual critics, Woodbridge and Balmer admit, “It is true that in the seventeenth century a good number of Christians esteemed the Bibles they had in their hands as infallible<sup>41</sup>.” The liberal historian, McCabe accepted that the Reformers had no time for rationalistic textual principles,

The reformers, indeed, extended little patronage to the exercise of reason in religious matters; they denounced it and its fruit, philosophical speculation, as an evil not to be tolerated; and Luther went so far as to assert (even to the disgust of the Church of Rome) that a proposition may be true in theology and false in philosophy<sup>42</sup>.

As we search the Reformation writings this fact becomes quickly apparent. Samuel Tregelles notes,

Beza’s text was during his life in very general use among Protestants; they seemed to feel that enough had been done to establish it, and they relied on it as giving them a firm basis....After the appearance of the texts of Stephanus and Beza, many Protestants ceased from all inquiry into the authorities on which the text of the New Testament in their hands was based<sup>43</sup>.

Even the Anabaptist leader, Balthasar Hubmaier took this position and wrote in 1526,

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<sup>41</sup> John D. Woodbridge and Kenneth S. Kantzer, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 219.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph McCabe, *Modern Rationalism: being a sketch of the progress of the rationalistic spirit in the nineteenth century*, (London: Watts, 1897), 9.

<sup>43</sup> Samuel Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament with Remarks on its Revision upon Critical Principles*, (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1854), 33 - 35

Thou knowest, Zwingli, that the Holy Scripture is such a complete, compacted, true, infallible, eternally immortal speech, that the least letter or tittle cannot pass away in this book<sup>44</sup>.

So strongly did the Reformers and their heirs fall back on the TR that textual critics such as Richard Bentley in 1716 derided it as “the Protestant Pope Stephens,” but admitted that “Stephens’ edition, set out and regulated by himself alone, is now become the standard. The text stands, as if an Apostle was his compositor<sup>45</sup>.”

Although the Reformers were accused of “bibliolatry” it was not the Bible they worshipped but the Author of it who has chosen to reveal Himself empirically in His written Word. Despite the revisionist argument that Calvin and Beza, had no other option but to use the Received Text, the facts are that they did have alternative options, but deliberately rejected them. They may not have had the quantity of evidence, but they were aware of the diversity of the variant readings thrown up by the textual critics today. Instead, they chose the path of Sacred Criticism which simply studied the texts to see what was received by the Church through history rather than the “restoration” of the text by Enlightenment Criticism. They recognised that copies and editions differed because of variants, but trusted the Holy Spirit and the common faith of God’s people. Beza made it clear, “that he was very unwilling to amend the basic text and was interested largely in readings which confirmed it<sup>46</sup>.” One Reformed critic of the TR, Greg Bahnsen admits many Reformers held this historic position,

Some Protestants have argued for the inspired infallibility of the vowel points in the Hebrew Old Testament (e.g., the Buxtorfs and John Owen; the Formula Consensus

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<sup>44</sup> Henry Clay Vedder, *Balthasar Hübmaier, the Leader of the Anabaptists*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905), 190.

<sup>45</sup> James Henry Monk, *The Life of Richard Bentley*, (London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1833), 399.

<sup>46</sup> Irena Doruta Backus, *The Reformed Roots of the English New Testament*, (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Papers, 1980), 6-7.

Helvetica more cautiously spoke of the inspiration of “at least the power of the points”). The errorless transmission and preservation of the original text of Scripture has been taught by men such as Hollaz, Quenstedt, and Turretin<sup>47</sup>.

#### CHALLENGE OF THE VULGATE

Initially, all of the various Protestant Confessional statements (such as the Westminster, the Philadelphia etc.) contain statements about the preservation of Scripture that were written in response to text critical problems and challenges of the Counter Reformation. Cognizant of the role the Received Text had in damaging the Romanist cause and giving authority to the Protestant cause, the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) declared Erasmus a Pelagian heretic, rejected his New Testament and edicted that only Jerome’s Latin Vulgate was the authentic Bible<sup>48</sup>. Trent’s argument was that the Scriptures are corrupted at the fount and we need an infallible church to determine the Word of God, as one can never be sure of the true text of Scripture. The Reformers argued the opposite and maintained that the Scriptures guide the church, as we have, by God’s providence, the uncorrupted fount, “by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages.” Ironically, now many Fundamental Protestants are positing that Rome was right when it sought to undermine our doctrine of *Sola Scriptura* on the basis of the variants they showed in their manuscripts. They argue that notwithstanding Rome’s other errors in theology, they were right about the Scriptures, and the post-Reformations dogmatists were wrong. As A. W. Pink observed,

The Papacy was shrewd enough to recognize that the authority of God’s Word must be undermined and its influence upon the nation weakened, before she had any hope of bringing it within her deadly toils. There is nothing she hates and dreads so much as the Bible, especially when it is circulated among the common people in their own tongue, as was clearly shown in the days of Queen Mary, of infamous

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<sup>47</sup> Greg Bahnsen, “The Inerrancy of the Autographa,” in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), 155.

<sup>48</sup> Will Durrant, *The Reformation*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 285.

memory. The organization of the Bible Societies, with their enormous output, was a rude shock to Rome, but she promptly countered it through “Modernism,” by discrediting the inerrancy of the Scriptures. The promulgation of the so-called “Higher Criticism” has done far more for the spread of infidelity among the masses than did the coarse blasphemies of Tom Paine; and it is among those who have no settled convictions that Rome wins most of her converts<sup>49</sup>!

To try and influence the English people back to Rome, the Jesuits prepared an English New Testament translation in 1582 based upon the Vulgate which was immediately sent to England, and secretly distributed through the country. As one historian observed, “The English Papists in the seminary at Rheims perceiving that they could no longer blindfold the laity from the scriptures, resolved to fit them with false spectacles; and set forth the Rhemish translation in opposition to the Protestant versions<sup>50</sup>.” The preface to this Rheims translation expressly states its purpose,

It is almost three hundred years since James Archbishop of Genoa, is said to have translated the Bible into Italian. More than two hundred years ago, in the days of Charles V the French king, was it put forth faithfully in French, the sooner to shake out of the deceived people’s hands, the false heretical translations of a sect called Waldenses<sup>51</sup>.

Benjamin Brook records that “The principal object of the Rhemish translators was not only to circulate their doctrines through the country, but also to depreciate as much as possible the English translations<sup>52</sup>.” He also recounts that,

The Rhemish translators found great fault with all the Protestant versions, as containing partial and false translations, and wilful and heretical corruptions,

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<sup>49</sup> A. W. Pink, “The Doctrine of Revelation,” online at [http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Revelation/rev\\_05.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/books/pink/Revelation/rev_05.htm) accessed in 21 January 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Cited in William Fulke, *Confutation of the Rhemish Testament*, (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co., published in 1619 reprinted 1834), preface essay by editor.

<sup>51</sup> Gerald Lewis Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation 1526-1707*, (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2004), 366.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin Brook, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Cartwright*, (London: John Snow, 1845), 256.

according to “erroneous men’s fancies” but this translation was intended as a substitute, and to put away those which they called “impure versions<sup>53</sup>.”

Catholic priest, Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623) in his *History of the Council of Trent* recalls,

On the contrary, the major part of the Divines said, that it had been necessary to account that translation, which formerly hath been read in all the churches [Latin Vulgate], and used in the schools, to be divine and authentical, otherwise they should yield the cause to the Lutherans, and open a gate to innumerable heresies... The Inquisitors will not be able to proceed against the Lutherans, in case they know not Hebrew and Greek, because they will suddenly answer, “the text is not so,” and “that translation is false<sup>54</sup>.”

Queen Elizabeth (1533 – 1603) was so concerned of the threat to English unity by the Jesuit Rhemist Bible that she sent to Beza for assistance to refute this perversion of the Received Text. It is recorded that he told her “that one of her Majesty’s own subjects was far better qualified to defend the Protestant cause against the Rhemists; and this person, he said, was Thomas Cartwright<sup>55</sup>.” It was said of Thomas Cartwright (c. 1535 – 1603), that he regarded the Vulgate as, “the Version adapted by the Rhemists... ..that all the soap and nitre they could collect would be insufficient to cleanse the Vulgate from the filth of blood in which it was originally conceived and had since collected in passing so long through the hands of unlearned monks, from which the Greek copies had altogether escaped<sup>56</sup>.” Brook records that,

Mr. Cartwright defended the holy Scriptures against the accusation of corruption, and maintained that the Old and New Testaments written in the original languages were preserved uncorrupted. They constituted the word of God, whose works are all perfect, then must his word continue unimpaired; and, since it was written for our instruction, admonition, and consolation, he concluded that, unless God was deceived and disappointed in his purpose, it must perform these friendly offices for

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 257.

<sup>54</sup> Paolo Sarpi, *History of the Council of Trent*, trans. by Nathaniel Brent, (London: 1629), 156.

<sup>55</sup> Benjamin Brook, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Cartwright*, 258

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 276.

the church of God to the end of the world. If the authority of the authentic copies in Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek were lost, or given up, or corrupted, or the sense changed, there would be no high court of appeal to put an end to disputes; so that the exhortation to have recourse to the law, the prophets, and the New Testament would be of very little effect. In this case our state would be worse than theirs under the law, and in the time of Christ; yea than those who lived some hundred years after Christ, when the ancient fathers exhorted the people to try all controversies by the Scriptures. Their own Gratian directs us, in deciding differences, not to the old translation, but to the originals of the Hebrew in the Old Testament, and of the Greek in the New<sup>57</sup>.

Thomas Cartwright observed this about preservation,

Woe unto the churches, if the Scriptures, the charters and records of heaven be destroyed, falsified, or corrupted. These divine charters were safely kept in one nation of the Jews; and though they were sometimes unfaithful, yet they kept the keys of the Lord's library: but now, when many nations have the keys, it is altogether incredible that any such corruptions should enter in, as the adversaries unwisely suppose. If the Lord preserved the book of Leviticus, with the account of the ancient ceremonies, which were afterward abolished, how much more may we conclude that his providence has watched over other books of Scripture which properly belong to our times and to our salvation? Will not the Scriptures bear witness to the perpetuity of their own authority? "Secret things belong to God;" but things revealed belong to us, and to our children forever. Jesus Christ said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Notwithstanding the sacred writings were disregarded, and even hated by most persons, they had been preserved entire as they were the first day they were given to the church of God. More than fifteen hundred years had elapsed, during which not any one book, nor part of any book, of canonical Scripture had been lost: and it was evident not only that the matter of the Scripture, but also the words; not only the sense and meaning, but also the manner and form of speech in them remained unaltered<sup>58</sup>.

Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, William Whitaker (1548-1595)

wrote the one extensive work on the subject of the Bible written by an English Reformer. In a classic riposte to the Romanist translation posited perfect preservation as an absolute necessity,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 274-5.

<sup>58</sup> Benjamin Brook, *Memoir of the Life and Writings of Thomas Cartwright*, 275-6.

Now we, not doubtfully or only with some probable shew, but most certainly, know that this Greek edition of the New Testament is no other than the inspired and archetypal scripture of the new Testament, commended by the apostles and evangelists to the Christian church. .... If God had permitted the scripture to perish in the Hebrew and Greek originals, in which it was first published by men divinely inspired, he would not have provided sufficiently for his church and for our faith. From the prophetic and apostolic scripture the church takes its origin, and the faith derives its source. But whence can it be ascertained that these are in all respects prophetic and apostolic scriptures, if the very writings of the prophets and apostles are not those which we consult<sup>59</sup>?

Whitaker went on to say he accepted the Received Text handed down by faith,

Now the Hebrew edition of the old, and the Greek of the New Testament, was always held the authentic scripture of God in the Christian churches for six hundred years after Christ. This, therefore, ought to be received by us also as authentic scripture. If they doubt the major, we must ask them, whether the church hath changed its authentic scripture, or hath not rather preserved, and commended to all succeeding generations, that which was in truth authentic from the very first? If it lost that which was published by the prophets and apostles, who can defend that negligence, who excuse so enormous a sacrilege<sup>60</sup>?

Whitaker also cleverly rejected the argument that the Masoretes had corrupted the Hebrew Text,

Besides, if the Jews had wished to corrupt the original scriptures, they would have laid their sacrilegious hands specially upon those places which concern Christ and confirm the faith. But in those places these fountains run so clear that one feels no lack: nay, they sometimes run far clearer than the Latin streams<sup>61</sup>.

He also showed how that God protected the Scriptures in the ages,

God protects the scriptures against Satan, as being their constant enemy. Satan hath frequently endeavoured to destroy the scriptures, knowing that they stand in his way: but he hath never spent any trouble or thought upon these unwritten traditions; for he supposed that his whole object would be gained if he could destroy the scriptures. In pursuance of this plan he hath raised up such impious tyrants as Antiochus, Maximin, Diocletian, and others, who have endeavoured

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<sup>59</sup> William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture: against the Papists, especially Bellarmine and Stapleton*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1588 reprinted 1849), 142, 148.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 155.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 162.



utterly to quench the light of scripture. Now, if religion could remain entire even when these books were lost, it would be in vain for Satan to labour with such furious efforts to remove these books<sup>62</sup>.

Bishop of Salisbury and eminent Divine, John Jewel (1522-1571), who was a strong apologist against the Church of Rome, also makes clear the need of perfect preservation,

By the space of so many thousand years, the word of God passed by so many dangers of tyrants, of Pharisees, of heretics, of fire, and of sword, and yet continueth and standeth until this day, without altering or changing one letter. This was a wonderful work of God, that having so many, so great enemies, and passing through so many, so great dangers, it yet continueth still without adding or altering of any one sentence, or word, or letter. No creature was able to do this, it was God's work. He preserved it, that no tyrant should consume it, no tradition choke it, no heretic maliciously should corrupt it. For His name's sake, and for the elect's sake, He would not suffer it to perish. For in it God hath ordained a blessing for His people, and by it He maketh covenant with them for life everlasting. Tyrants, and Pharisees, and heretics, and the enemies of the cross of Christ have an end, but the word of God hath no end. No force shall be able to decay it. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it<sup>63</sup>.

Cambridge-educated Puritan preacher, Nicholas Gibbens also retorted in 1602,

For by these authorities it may seem apparent, that the Hebrew Text has been corrupted by the Jews: which if it be; where is the truth the Scriptures to be found, but either perished, or only remaining in that translation which the Papists so greatly magnify. For answer whereunto, we affirm and testify by the authority of the Scriptures themselves, (which is the voice of God) of the Fathers, and of the adversaries themselves; that the Scriptures in the Hebrew tongue are pure, and unspotted of all corruption<sup>64</sup>.

Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617 - 1688) the German Lutheran dogmatician argued,

We believe, as is our duty, that the providential care of God has always watched over the original and primitive texts of the canonical Scriptures in such a way that

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 653.

<sup>63</sup> John Jewel, *The works of John Jewel*, 9Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1848), Vol VII, 291.

<sup>64</sup> Nicholas Gibbens, *Questions and Disputations Concerning the Holy Scripture* (London: 1602), 316. Cited in David S. Katz, *God's Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism*, (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 2004), 75.

we can be certain that the sacred codices which we now have in our hands are those which existed at the time of Jerome and Augustine, nay at the time of Christ Himself and His apostles<sup>65</sup>.

English Presbyterian clergyman, John Flavel (1627 - 1691) argued in response to a question: “What was the end of writing the word?” answered,

That the church to the end of the world might have a sure, known, standing-rule, to try and judge all things by, and not be left to the uncertainty of traditions<sup>66</sup>.

English Puritan and theologian, Edward Leigh (1602–1671) explained why we needed confidence in a pure text for our Bibles,

If the authority of the authentical copies in Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek fall, then there is no pure Scripture in the Church of God, there is no high court of appeal where controversies (rising upon the diversity of translations, or otherwise) may be ended. The exhortations of having recourse unto the Law and to the Prophets, and of our Saviour Christ asking “How it is written,” and “How readest thou,” is now either of none effect, or not sufficient<sup>67</sup>.”

The great Puritan Thomas Watson (c. 1620 -1686) makes clear,

The devil and his agents have been blowing at Scripture light, but could never blow it out; a clear sign that it was lighted from heaven. . . .The letter of Scripture has been preserved, without any corruption, in the original tongue<sup>68</sup>.

Another Puritan, John Owen adopted the same stance,

It can, then, with no colour of probability be asserted (which yet I find some learned men too free in granting), namely, that there hath the same fate attended the Scripture in its transcription as hath done other books. Let me say without offence, this imagination, asserted on deliberation, seems to me to border on atheism. Surely the promise of God for the preservation of his word, with his love

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<sup>65</sup> Cited in Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study in the Theology of the Seventeenth-Century Lutheran Dogmaticians*, (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1955), 139

<sup>66</sup> Cited by Douglas Wilson, “Quotations on Textual Purity,” *Credenda*, Vol 10, Issue 1 online at <http://www.credenda.org/issues/10-1disputatio.php> accessed 20 April 2009.

<sup>67</sup> Edward Leigh, *Treatise*, (London, 1656), Vol I, vi. 102-3

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1965, First published in 1692), 27.

and care of his church, of whose faith and obedience that word of his is the only rule, requires other thoughts at our hands<sup>69</sup>.

Owen did not accept every “obscure private copy...to be admitted as a various lection”

or Rome’s textual critics views of variants, as Owen explains,

Let it be remembered, that the vulgar copy we use, was the public possession of many generations; that upon the invention of printing, it was in actual authority throughout the world, with them that used and understood that language...men may, if they please, take pains to inform the world, wherein such and such copies are corrupted or mistaken, but to impose their known failings on us as various lections, is of course not to be approved....[t]he generality of learned men among Protestants are not yet infected with this leaven...And if this change of judgment which hath been long insinuating itself, by the curiosity and boldness of critics, should break in also on the Protestant world, and be avowed in public works, it is easy to conjecture what the end will be. We went from Rome under the conduct of the purity of the originals, I wish none have a mind to return thither again, under the pretence of their corruption<sup>70</sup>.

Swiss Hebraist, Johannes Buxtorf (1599 –1664), who defended the preservation of even the Hebrew Vowel points against the attack of Louis Cappel with studies published in 1624 and 1650. Buxtorf also affirms the purity of the Received Text in 1620,

From the extremity of the East to the extremity of the West the word of God is read with one mouth and in one manner; and in all the books that there are in Asia, Africa, and Europe, there is discernible a full agreement, without any difference whatever<sup>71</sup>.

John Woodbridge notes of Rome’s influence in this attack and states, “Cappel was able to publish one of these works only with the help of the Roman Catholic

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<sup>69</sup> John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1853), 357.

<sup>70</sup> John Owen, *Of the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew and Greek Text of the Scripture*, (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 473 to 477.

<sup>71</sup> Cited critically in Henry Charles Fox, *On the revision of the Authorised Version of the Scriptures: With an Account of the Revision Now*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1875), 10.

apologist, Jean Morin<sup>72</sup>.” Martin Klauber also notes the staunch defence of the Masoretic by the Reformers, “Reformed scholars of the mid-seventeenth century, following the lead of Buxdorf, considered all other versions of the OT as subordinate to the Masoretic text.....Cappel’s theories were generally rejected in Reformed circles<sup>73</sup>.” Reformed Protestants understood well the importance of linguistic continuity by perfect preservation. This is clearly delineated with the strength of their defence of the Canon, the Received Greek Text, and the authenticity of the vowel points in the Masoretic text.

A typical pre-suppositional approach based on providential preservation was that of the Principal of the University of Edinburgh, Robert Rollock (1555-1599). He argued for the “the preservation of the divine oracles of God unto our times<sup>74</sup>” and the retention of many disputed passages such as I John 5:7, Mark 16, John 8 based on the fact that these are, “our Greek books, which we hold for authentic, have this verse and our Church receives it.” He rejected all the textual critical assaults of Rome on the Received Text by summarizing,

Thus we see then the adversaries cannot prove by these places that the Greek edition of the New Testament is corrupted, and so act authentical. Wherefore it resteth that the Hebrew edition of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament is only authentic<sup>75</sup>.

Henry Walker in 1642 also discerned the wiles of the Jesuit plot and argued that the supposed textual problems were “vanity” and “inventions” as, “the Pope is glad of these

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<sup>72</sup> John Woodbridge, “Biblical Authority: Towards an Evaluation of the Rogers and McKim Proposal,” *Trinity Journal* 1:2 (Fall 1980): 202.

<sup>73</sup> Martin I. Klauber, “The Helvetic Formula Consensus (1675): An Introduction and Translation,” *Trinity Journal* 11:1 (Spring 1990): 105-106.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Rollock, *A Treatise of Effectual Calling (1603)*, (Edinburgh: Woodrow Society, 1844), 71

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 127

distractions amongst us, and would now take the opportunity to snatch away the Bible from us; he would fain take our religion away; but we hope to send him back to Rome again with a powder<sup>76</sup>. Dr Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713), provost of the College of Dublin and later Archbishop of Armagh writes against one sceptic who attacked the Hebrew Masoretic Text,

It may be suspected, that the intention is to bring it into doubt, whether we have any such thing, as a true Bible at all, which we may confide in, as God's Word... However, I doubt not, but that, by God's Providence, as the Hebrew Text hath hitherto stood firm, so it will stand on its own bottom to wear out all assaults against it, and be, what it always was, received as the undoubted Word of God, when all the arguments and objections against it are vanish'd into smoke<sup>77</sup>.

The Rhemist version was later revised by Richard Challoner in the mid-eighteenth century. He was an English convert from Protestantism who knew well the nuances of the King James Version and deliberately sought to revise the Douay-Rheims into closer conformity with the diction of the King James Version<sup>78</sup>. Notwithstanding, so successful was the Authorised Version and Cartwright's rebuttal of the Rhemist version that the devil was forced to change his strategy and attack not by the Latin but by the Greek.

It was about another century before Rome refined a weapon to combat *Sola Scriptura* at the hands of Romanist priest, Richard Simon (1638-1712) through "Textual Criticism." Baird tells us, "Simon sharpened historical criticism into a weapon that could be used in the attack on Protestantism's most fundamental error: the doctrine of

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<sup>76</sup> Henry Walker, *Five Lookes Over the Professors of the English Bible*, (London: 1642) cited in David S. Katz, *God's Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism*, (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 2004), 76.

<sup>77</sup> Edward Pocock, *The Theological Works*, ed. Leonard Twells, (London:1740), i. 74. Cited in David S. Katz, *God's Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism*, (Cambridge: Yale University Press, 2004), 75.

<sup>78</sup> William Baird, *History of New Testament Research: From Deism to Tubingen*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 19.

Sola Scriptura<sup>79</sup>.” Indeed, Simon himself explains plainly his purpose, “the great changes that have taken place in the manuscripts of the Bible - as we have shown in the first book of this work - since the first originals were lost, completely destroy the principle of the Protestants...if tradition is not joined to scripture, there is hardly anything in religion that one can confidently affirm<sup>80</sup>.” They assembled many of the variant readings into Polyglots to aid this attack. The *Cambridge History of the Bible* accepts the universal standard of the TR amidst the Reformed Churches,

In creating the phrase *textus receptus* they had confirmed acceptance of the third edition of Estienne and Beza’s recension of it as the standard version. Effective awareness of the significance of textual criticism for the ancient versions of the biblical text may be said to begin only with the *Biblia Polyglotta* of Bishop Walton in 1657<sup>81</sup>.

Even Dan Wallace accepts that, “New Testament textual criticism was born as a polemic against Protestants, intended to show that they couldn’t really trust the Bible!<sup>82</sup>” Thus under the influence of Romanism, Textual Criticism emerged from enlightenment and humanistic grounds and would culminate in the Revised Version.

When the Reformers urged, *Ad Fontes* (“Back to the sources”) it was to the extant Hebrew and Greek texts in hand to which they were pointing. This *a priori* view of preservation held sway until the nineteenth century and an attempt to accommodate rationalist textual criticism with belief in inspiration due to the attack of liberals. This new position was also a faith-based presupposition, but this time it was not in God but

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<sup>79</sup> F. F. Bruce, “Transmission and Translation of the Bible,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), v. 1, 52-53.

<sup>80</sup> Cited in Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 41.

<sup>81</sup> J. Greenslade ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol, 64.

<sup>82</sup>Dan Wallace, “Is the Bible a ‘Paper Pope’ for Protestants?” online at <http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2007/08/is-the-bible-a-%E2%80%9Cpaper-pope-%E2%80%9D-for-protestants/> accessed 4 February 2009.

rather in man's rationalistic abilities to let science tell us what the text probably is. In contrast, the Reformers never set the apographs against the autographs, nor did they embrace scientific neutral principles that Providence must adhere to. They were biased against Rome and its Vulgate Bible, and they explicitly approached the whole issue theologically. Adam Fox cites the textual critic Curcellaeus (1586-1659) lamenting that "the great majority of theologians acquiesce in the ordinary editions as if they were perfect<sup>83</sup>." Beza is accused by CT advocates of neglecting the Alexandrian Text manuscripts such as Codex Bezae which he had in his possession because they "differed too frequently from the printed texts<sup>84</sup>." In other words, Beza held fast to the TR because of a presuppositional commitment rather than a scientific one per se. As a consequence, all of the Bible translations produced during the Reformation and post-Reformation eras were translations of this Received Text, not some hypothetical reconstruction of lost original autographs.

The Reformers did not take their creedal stand against Rome upon a utopian inerrant original autograph. To them, there was an identifiable and existing text in use by the Greek speaking Church which had been transmitted from a handwritten manuscript form to a printed form. Likewise, they did not advocate a radical individualism where every man decides for himself which words are genuine and would have rejected the current state of textual criticism, where every man is a textual critic with disdain. It is true, that unlike Luther, John Calvin did not initially *uniformly* base his readings on the text of Erasmus and "had an affinity for a renegade edition

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<sup>83</sup> Adam Fox, *John Mill and Richard Bentley: A Study of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, 1675-1729*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), 50 cited in Theodore P. Letis, *The Majority Text*, (Grand Rapids: Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, 1987), 125

<sup>84</sup> J. Greenslade ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol 3 (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 62.

published by Simon de Colines (1534)<sup>85</sup>.” This text included a number of variant readings from critical text manuscripts and from Rome’s Complutensian<sup>86</sup>. However, in later life Calvin rejected this view to return to the TR preferring the common readings by faith<sup>87</sup>. The facts of history are that Rome accused Protestants of having a “paper pope” by judging all matters religious with the Scripture. Ironically, five hundred years ago a man positing this kind of accusation would be called a Romanist heretic but today he is called an enlightened fundamentalist! Indeed, TR critics even attack preservationists today by equating heresy with faith in an inerrant Bible.

#### WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

A good example of the Reformation view on preservation is the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) written in response to Tridentine Romanism and early rationalism. The Confessional understanding of the doctrine of Holy Scripture was a dyke to keep out the deadly waters of disbelief in God’s word. Like the early Reformers, the Divines looked first at the history of manuscript transmission to see what God had done, rather than the manuscripts to see what man had to do. The Westminster Divines never argued for the preservation of a copy, but the preservation of the Words, because that is what the Bible teaches. That took a presuppositional approach to this issue. They knew that if there is another authority (whether it be our individual determination of trustworthiness or the authority of an ecclesiastical leader) by which we are to determine and believe that the Bible is the Word of God that

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<sup>85</sup> Theodore P. Letis, *The Majority Text*, 119.

<sup>86</sup> J. Greenslade ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, Vol 3 (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 61.

<sup>87</sup>Theodore P. Letis, *Edward Freer Hills’s Contribution to the Revival of the Ecclesiastical Text*. (Philadelphia: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 1987), 26.



authority itself would be the ultimate authority. Is it up to the reader to discern which portions of the Scriptures are inspired and which are not? Hence the Westminster Confession of Faith (I:4) states,

The authority of Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

Douglas Wilson explains the Confessional approach,

We receive these Scriptures on their own authority. They are the Word of God, and they speak to us as such. Nevertheless, God has given us an earthly testimony concerning them. Luther used the apt picture of Christ and John the Baptist. In no way did John bestow any authority upon Christ when he said “Behold, the Lamb of God.” At the same time, John’s witness was important. In the same way, submissively and authoritatively, the Church points to the sixty-six books of the Bible. During the Christian aeon, the Church is responsible to keep and preserve the same kind of testimony concerning the entire Bible that we gave in our younger years, when we had been entrusted only with the Old Testament books. When modern groups and sects point to other books than what God has given (e.g. Mormons point to the Book of Mormon, Romanists point to the Apocrypha, etc.), they are exhibiting more than just their unbelief. They are also showing their radical detachment from the ancient and historical Church<sup>88</sup>.

A crystallization of the opposition to textual and historical criticism is stated in positive terms in the Westminster Confession of Faith. It should be noted that the Confession first deals with the canon of Scripture before it turns to discuss the doctrine of inspiration and authority and preservation. There is then a refutation of the canonicity of the Apocryphal before the Confession deal with the declaration of providential preservation. This understanding of cause and effect in respect of canonization will be an important principle to remember when we consider the preservation of the Scriptures. This seems to have been a reasoned and logical presuppositional unfolding

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<sup>88</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Mother Kirk*, 52.

as they are implicitly stating that the same methodology for determining canonicity must be extended to the individual words of the canon. Canonicity was recognized by the true Church (not Rome) and the corollary of this must be that the Canonized Words must be recognized by the true Church and not Rome's texts or apostate textual critics such as Westcott, Hort, Aland, Metzger etc.

The Confession is a constitutional document and must be interpreted in the light of its historical context. Section 1.8 should not be read in a vacuum of history; it is a pre-suppositional setting forth of statements which identify the canonical text, and disclaims the Apocryphal as being non-canonical. Unmistakably, the Westminster divines claimed to possess the authentic text, and all critics should candidly acknowledge this rather than attempting to re-interpret it to conform to the fluid tradition of modern textual criticism. The Divines were men of prodigious learning and were aware of many minor textual disagreements going back to the days of the Early Fathers. Yet this awareness did not diminish their unshakable conviction that they continued to hold in hand an indestructible authentical revelation. They knew it was the church's treasure and rock of defence against Rome and not one to ever casually or carelessly surrender. Given this approach, we are left with one of two choices: either the text they used is the "authentic text" or their claim was false. The Confession requires an acceptance of the reformation text as the authoritative court of appeal or else it is meaningless. Indeed, so seriously did the Westminster Divines view even spelling errors in various printings of the Authorized Version as "dangerous to religion," that they moved Parliament to outlaw the importation of bootleg reprints from Europe<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> Frederick Scrivener, *Authorized Edition of the English Bible (1611)*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1884), 25

William Orr in his commentary on the Confession makes clear, “Now this affirms that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New which was known to the Westminster divines was immediately inspired by God because it was identical with the first text that God has kept pure in all the ages. The idea that there are mistakes in the Hebrew Masoretic texts or in the *Textus Receptus* of the New Testament was unknown to the authors of the Confession of Faith<sup>90</sup>.” Reformed writer, Andrew Sandlin also accepts that “For the Reformation heritage, it is the preserved text in the church, not the long-lost autographs, that constitutes the infallible word of God. A single authoritative text undergirds a single authoritative theology and single authoritative dogma and therefore a single Christian authoritative Christian commonwealth<sup>91</sup>.” He also argued, “We do not choose our Faith any more than we choose our parents. We are baptized into a religion, affirm a creed, and preach a gospel with specific orthodox boundaries, and to alter those boundaries is to alter the very Faith itself....The text handed down to us is the text providentially preserved in the church. To contend for the providential preservation of Christian truth in orthodoxy while denying the providential preservation of The Truth in the text of Scripture defies reason and faith<sup>92</sup>.”

Indeed, the Westminster Divines clearly cognizant of textual critics positing naturalistic and man-centered doctrines of preservation explicitly state that the doctrine of preservation must be hedged by the Scripture alone:

IV. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, depends not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon

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<sup>90</sup> William F Orr, “The Authority of the Bible as Reflected in the proposed Confession of 1967,” as quoted by Theodore Letis, *The Majority Text*, 174.

<sup>91</sup> Andrew Sandlin, “An Establishment Bible,” *Chalcedon Magazine*, (1997): 3-5.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 3-5.

God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God

X. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

The Confession notably does not argue that Scripture is established by the prior and superior authority of modern textual criticism, but that the perfectly preserved TR (as cited in the confession), sits in judgment upon textual criticism. The liberal writer, McCabe writing in 1897 agrees that the Westminster divines had assumed providential preservation of all the words by sneering,

Until the seventeenth century divines had assumed that Providence had miraculously guarded its inspired books. From this torpid belief they were at length roused by the controversies on the date and origin of the vowel points of the Hebrew text between the Buxtorfs and Morinus and Cappell, and by the discovery of a vast number of variations in the manuscripts and printed books of Scripture Kennicott's Hebrew Bible, published from 1776 to 1790, gave 200,000 variations. Thus a door was opened to a certain reverent kind of criticism<sup>93</sup>.

Leading contemporary textual critic, Dan Wallace admits that the Divines based their doctrine of perfect preservation on the TR,

The response by Protestants was swift, though perhaps not particularly well thought out. In 1646, the first doctrinal statement about God preserving his text was formulated as part of the Westminster Confession. The problem is that what the Westminster divines were thinking of when they penned that confession was the TR. By virtually ignoring the variants, they set themselves up for more abuse<sup>94</sup>.

Swiss-Italian Protestant theologian, Francis Turretin (1623–1687) expounded on the early confessional doctrine of Biblical preservation and clearly understood it to mean “entire preservation,”

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<sup>93</sup> Joseph McCabe, *Modern Rationalism*, (London: Watts & Co, 1897), 46.

<sup>94</sup>Dan Wallace, “Is the Bible a ‘Paper Pope’ for Protestants?” online at <http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2007/08/is-the-bible-a-%E2%80%9Cpaper-pope-%E2%80%9D-for-protestants/>

Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired men, would not *take care of their entire preservation*<sup>95</sup>.

Turretin also unambiguously rejected the idea that the essential doctrines are preserved, but the exact wording of the text as well for as he argues,

Unless unimpaired integrity characterize the Scriptures, they could not be regarded as the sole rule of faith and practice, and the door would be thrown wide open to atheists, libertines, enthusiasts, and other profane persons like them for destroying its authenticity...and overthrowing the foundation of salvation. For since nothing false can be an object of [saving] faith, how could the Scriptures be held as authentic and reckoned divine if liable to contradictions and corruptions? Nor can it be said that these corruptions are only in smaller things which do not affect the foundation of faith. For if once the authenticity...of the Scriptures is taken away (which would result even from the incurable corruption of one passage), how could our faith rest on what remains? And if corruption is admitted in those of lesser importance, why not in others of greater? Who could assure me that no error or blemish had crept into fundamental passages? Or what reply could be given to a subtle atheist or heretic who should pertinaciously assert that this or that passage less in his favor had been corrupted? It will not do to say that divine providence wished to keep it free from serious corruptions, but not from minor. For besides the fact that this is gratuitous, it cannot be held without injury, as if lacking in the necessary things which are required for the full credibility...of Scripture itself. Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word to these inspired...men, would not take care of their entire preservation. If men use the utmost care diligently to preserve their words (especially if they are of any importance, as for example a testament or contract) in order that it may not be corrupted, how much more, must we suppose, would God take care of His Word which He intended as a testament and seal of His covenant with us, so that it might not be corrupted; especially when He could easily foresee and prevent such corruptions in order to establish the faith of His church<sup>96</sup>?

Richard Capel, one of the Westminster divines, warned concerning those who undermined the preservation of Scripture when he wrote in 1658:

And to the like purpose is that observation, that the two Tables written immediately by Moses and the Prophets, and the Greek Copies immediately penned by the Apostles, and Apostolical men are all lost, or not to be made use of, except by a very few. And that we have none in Hebrew or Greek, but what are transcribed.

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<sup>95</sup>Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, translated by George Musgrave Giger, edited by James T Denneson Jr, vol 1 (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1992),71.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 71.

Now transcribers are ordinary men, subject to mistake, may fail having no unerring spirit to hold their hands in writing.

Referring to these types of statements, Capel immediately writes:

These be terrible blasts, and do little else when they meet with a weak head and heart, but open the door to Atheism and quite to fling off the bridle, which only can hold them and us in the ways of truth and piety: this is to fill the conceits of men with evil thoughts against the Purity of the Originals: And if the Fountains run not clear, the Translation cannot be clean<sup>97</sup>.

Another of the original members of the Westminster assembly, John Lightfoot, writes:

The same power and care of God that preserves the church would preserve the Scriptures pure to it: and He that did, and could, preserve the whole could preserve every part, so that not so much as a tittle should perish<sup>98</sup>.

J S Candlish rightly observed in 1877 that, “the word *authentic* is used, not in the modern sense in which it has been employed by many....as meaning historically true, but in its more literal sense, attested as a correct copy of the author’s work<sup>99</sup>.” Indeed, the Reformers would have no grounds to oppose the Vulgate as deviating from the fountain of the originals if their text was also corrupted and uncertain. It is also notable that the Westminster Confessional documents, including the Bible version used in conjunction with the Annotations, all quote the Authorised Version including so-called problematic passages such as I John 5:7. Reformed church historian, Richard Muller summarized the post-Reformation Reformed view of the providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures,

By “original” and “authentic” text, the Protestant orthodox do not mean the autographa which no one can possess but the apographa in the original tongue

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<sup>97</sup>Richard Capel, *Capel’s Remains*, (London, 1658), 19-43.

<sup>98</sup> John Lightfoot, *The Whole Works of Rev. John Lightfoot*, (London: J.F. Dowe, 1822-25), 408.

<sup>99</sup> J. S Candlish, “The Doctrine of the Westminster Confession on Scripture,” *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* XXVI (January 1877) as cited in Theodore Letis, ed, *The Majority Text*, 174.

which are the source of all versions. The Jews throughout history and the church in the time of Christ regarded the Hebrew of the Old Testament as authentic and for nearly six centuries after Christ, the Greek of the New Testament was viewed as authentic without dispute. It is important to note that the Reformed orthodox insistence on the identification of the Hebrew and Greek texts as alone authentic does not demand direct reference to autographa in those languages: the “original and authentic text” of Scripture means, beyond the autograph copies, the legitimate tradition of Hebrew and Greek apographa.

The case for Scripture as an infallible rule of faith and practice and the separate arguments for a received text free from major (non-scribal) error rests on an examination of the apographa and does not seek the infinite regress of the lost autographa as a prop for textual infallibility<sup>100</sup>.

Douglas Wilson concurs,

According to Westminster, the originals that were the final arbiter were the apographic texts, not the original autographs that nobody has. The apographs were the Word of God in both substance and words. The translations were the Word of God with regard to substance. The modern (and common) statement of faith that the Bible is inerrant in the autographs would have been considered by them as hopelessly irrelevant. What good is an inerrant Bible that nobody has? You might as well affirm the inerrancy of the one copy of the Bible in heaven that Jesus has in His Library<sup>101</sup>.

#### OTHER CONFESSIONS

The Formula Consensus Helvetica (1675), which was drafted amidst the rising tide of text critical challenges is even more explicit that we have all the Words of God perfectly preserved for us today to the jot and tittle. It extended the doctrine of inspiration and perfect preservation to the very Hebrew Vowel points and argued that those who accept variant readings, “bring the foundation of our faith and its inviolable authority into perilous hazard,”

#### CANONS

I. God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have His word, which is the “power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 1:16), committed

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<sup>100</sup> Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 433.

<sup>101</sup> Douglas Wilson, “Westminster One: Of the Holy Scripture,” online at <http://www.dougwils.com/index.asp?Action=Anchor&CategoryID=1&BlogID=2711> accessed 20 April 2009.

to writing by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore the Church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world, a “sure word of prophecy” and “Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass” (Matt. 5:18).

II. But, in particular, the Hebrew Original of the Old Testament, which we have received and to this day do retain as handed down by the Jewish Church, unto whom formerly “were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2), is, not only in its consonants, but in its vowels—either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points—not only in its matter, but in its words, inspired of God, thus forming, together with the Original of the New Testament, the sole and complete rule of our faith and life; and to its standard, as to a Lydian stone, all extant versions, oriental and occidental, ought to be applied, and where ever they differ, be conformed.

III. Therefore we can by no means approve the opinion of those who declare that the text which the Hebrew Original exhibits was determined by man’s will alone, and do not scruple at all to remodel a Hebrew reading which they consider unsuitable, and amend it from the Greek Versions of the LXX and others, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Chaldee Targums, or even from other sources, yea, sometimes from their own reason alone; and furthermore, they do not acknowledge any other reading to be genuine except that which can be educed by the critical power of the human judgment from the collation of editions with each other and with the various readings of the Hebrew Original itself—which, they maintain, has been corrupted in various ways; and finally, they affirm that besides the Hebrew edition of the present time, there are in the Versions of the ancient interpreters which differ from our Hebrew context other Hebrew Originals, since these Versions are also indicative of ancient Hebrew Originals differing from each other. Thus they bring the foundation of our faith and its inviolable authority into perilous hazard.

There are many other Confessional writings exhibiting TR only readings. For instance, the influential Particular Baptist *Confession of Faith* of 1644 cites Acts 8:37 and the disputed long ending of Mark. The Particular Baptist *Second London Confession of Faith*, originally printed in 1677 references 1 John 5:7 to prove Trinitarianism and references the long ending of Mark three times<sup>102</sup>. The General Baptist *Orthodox Creed*

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<sup>102</sup> For a complete list of Baptist Confessions citing the TR see Thomas Ross, “The Canonicity of the Received Bible Established from Reformation and Post-Reformation Baptist Confessions online at <http://thross7.googlepages.com/CanonicityoftheTRSeeninBaptistConfes.pdf> accessed on 5 February 2009.



of 1679 writes out 1 John 5:7 in the text and references it five times. The Baptist New Hampshire Confession (1833) also concurs:

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is an infallible and inerrant treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter ... and therefore is, and *shall remain to the end of the world*, the true centre of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried<sup>103</sup>.

To reject perfect preservation, one is essentially arguing that believers from 1500 to 1800 only possessed something which approximated to the Word of God, and that they did not possess the pure word of God. Therefore these eminent Divines were in fact wrong in claiming to possess the authentic word of God. The TR is the only text whose adherents even mention scriptural presuppositions and is the only one the church received, agreed upon, and settled on. Have we now been emancipated by apostate post-enlightenment scholars, who led us to the true text based on no theological or scriptural presuppositions?

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<sup>103</sup> Philip Schaff, ed, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes. Vol III: The Evangelical Protestant Creed*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1931), 742.

## II

### WARFIELD OVERTURNS HISTORIC POSITION

The first and longest chapter in the Westminster Confession is *On the Holy Scriptures*, as the Divines deliberately placed the Church under the authority of the Bible alone. As one writer admitted, “If any chapter in the Confession was more carefully framed than another, it was this, ‘of the Holy Scripture.’ It formed the subject of repeated and earnest debate in the House of Commons as well as in the Assembly.<sup>104</sup>” Liberals sought a revision of the Westminster Confession and were ultimately successful in the twentieth century when capitulation *inter alia* to textual criticism gave rise to creedal revision. Unitarians, such as George Ellis, in 1857 now claimed, “that the best works in Biblical criticism and exposition...indicate opinions and a spirit more or less inconsistent with the formulas” and “their object is to redeem Christian truth from metaphysical perplexity; to shape the dogmas of the creed into assertions of faith which will bear to be uttered in this modern age of time<sup>105</sup>.”

The battle for the Bible was especially linked in Presbyterian circles with a battle for the authority of the Westminster Confession. The shift against the Authorised Version and a new position of inerrancy in the autographs only came about during the defense against Liberalism by men like B.B. Warfield (1851 - 1921). Warfield sought to overturn the views of men like the liberal, Charles Briggs who argued at his 1873 heresy trial that the Confession refers to copies in Chapter 1:8 as being inspired and

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<sup>104</sup> John Struthers, *Minutes of the sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines while engaged in preparing their directory for church government, confession of faith, and catechisms*, (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874), Introduction.

<sup>105</sup> George Ellis, “*The New Theology*,” *Christian Examiner* 62 (May 1857), 340-341.

preserved so as they were so many variants in the extant manuscripts so it must follow that there were errors in the originals. Rather than concede there was a perfectly preserved text by providential preservation available, Warfield posited the inerrancy of the original autographs doctrine, which he believed was as an unassailable shield insulating the Bible from all assault. D. G. Hart and John R. Muether explain the historical context,

For a variety of historical reasons American Presbyterians throughout the nineteenth century were fully committed to the Enlightenment and scientific methods as the surest means for arriving at truth. Though still believing in the authority of Scripture, the best—or at least the most widely accepted—way of demonstrating the truth of the Bible was by appealing to reason and Scripture’s harmony with nature and the self-evident truths of human experience. Even though the Presbyterian theologians who taught at Princeton Seminary, such as Charles Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, believed in and defended the sinfulness of man, including human reason, their fundamental acceptance of the Enlightenment also produced apologetics that in many cases deemed the mind to be a reliable and authoritative guide to truth, including the truths of the Bible<sup>106</sup>.

Warfield’s position was derived from the support of the textual work of men like F. J. A. Hort who in his *The Way The Truth and the Life* lectures who reversed orthodox Protestantism by arguing that, “human search precedes Divine revelation<sup>107</sup>.”

In an article on inspiration, Warfield makes this clear,

Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. It is the last and crowning fact as to the Scriptures. These we first prove authentic, historically credible, generally trustworthy, before we prove them inspired....The test of the truth of the claims of the Bible to be inspired of God through comparison with its contents, characteristics and phenomena, the Bible cannot expect to escape; and the lovers of the Bible will be the last to deny the validity of it. By all means let the doctrine of the Bible be

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<sup>106</sup> D. G. Hart and John R. Muether, “Why Machen Hired Van Til,” online at <http://www.opc.org/OS/MachenVanTil.html> accessed 22 April 2009.

<sup>107</sup> William L. Sachs, *The Transformation of Anglicanism: From State Church to Global Communion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 149.

tested by the facts and let the test be made all the more, not the less, stringent and penetrating because of the great issues that hang upon it<sup>108</sup>.

The American Presbyterian Church comments,

Here Warfield unmistakably displays his rationalistic approach to the Scriptures and their defense. The Bible is to be treated in a neutral fashion and treated as skeptically as any other book. It is only to be received as trustworthy and accepted as the inspired word of God if it can pass a number of rationalistic tests of human devising that can demonstrate that it is worthy of being believed. Here we come to the real crux of the issue. Here is the Achille's heel of Warfield's position. Here he answers the age old question, the question of Pilate when he addressed Christ, "*What is truth.*" In other words the question of how we ascertain what is truth. The eternal question of by what standard we determine what is truth and what is falsehood. The orthodox and Biblical answer to this question is that the Bible, God's word, is the standard. We measure all other statements and all other claims by the standard of the Bible. As the Scriptures themselves declare, "Let God be true and every man a liar." Warfield reverses this doctrine. We measure the claims of the Bible by some other standard, some merely human standard. Any only after God's word has been approved and found acceptable by some other, and therefore logically higher standard, is it to be received as the word of God. Warfield places God in the dock and his word is put on trial. This is nothing less than the rationalistic techniques of higher criticism being applied to the question of Biblical infallibility. Warfield may come up with the right answer, but the manner that he arrives at it is nothing less than disastrous and is subversive of the very Scriptures that he is pretending to defend<sup>109</sup>.

After being given a letter of introduction by Philip Schaff, Warfield entered the University of Leipzig in 1876 for a year's study, where he embraced German Textual criticism. The sophisticated and erudite Germans were regarded, albeit with some reservations, by American theologians as intellectually rigorous and exactingly precise to the free inquiry of textual truth. In Germany, Warfield was exposed to the modernism of Schleiermacher, Hume, and Kant, who openly denied any miraculous intervention by God. Princeton by the 1830s had embraced German Critical methods as legitimate and useful tools of study, whilst confidently believing they would be immune to the more

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<sup>108</sup> B. B. Warfield, "*The Real Problem of Inspiration,*" in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1970), 169-226.

<sup>109</sup> "B. B. Warfield and the Doctrine of Inspiration" online at <http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/inspiration.htm> accessed 20 February 2009.

radical conclusions of it<sup>110</sup>. Warfield returned to America determined to weave German Critical pre-suppositions with the historic view of verbal inspiration.

The Westminster Assembly had declared that the texts of the Bible, “being immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical” (I:8). As Warfield now disagreed with the Confession’s historic understanding, he attempted to modify the document to suit the new fluid textual tradition. Textual criticism precipitated this new nineteenth century, autographic inerrancy theory of Warfield. In doing so he hoped to straddle the Confessional fence with one foot on either side by re-establishing the redefinition of *Sola Scriptura* as the hypothetical “inerrant original autograph.” By this biblical paradigm shift, he was able to shift the locus of inspiration from the Holy Bible to the lost originals.

Warfield needed to relegate the Westminster Confession’s unambiguous position on inspiration to the “inscrutable autographs” instead of the received text. In effect, he sought to “demythologize” the Confession to fit in with modern views of higher criticism. This would result in a text today that was in reality merely partially and occasionally inspired and established reason as the judge of revelation. Now God would be viewed as being contingent on mankind than the Sovereign Ruler who preserved His Word by His direct intervention. Warfield utilized the Common Sense Realism presuppositions that flourished in Scotland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries to show that the understanding of Scripture was simply a matter of observation and inductive reasoning from the facts. Both liberals and conservatives now tragically embraced the *fideistic* premise in the power of empirical science as a means to truth and a commitment to the inductive method rather than the

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<sup>110</sup> See for example Archibald Alexander, “Survey of Modern German Works on Interpretation” *Princeton Review* 5 (Jan 1833): 9.

pre-suppositional. Warfield also argued that we should be thankful that, “such has been the providence of God in preserving for His Church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures, with only “comparatively infrequent blemishes...its wonderful approximation to its autograph<sup>111</sup>.”

Certainly, Warfield needs to explain if the pure originals are not preserved purely, then how can they be preserved at all? If we have “essentially” preserved Words are they essentially inerrant and infallible? Such a statement has no precise meaning. It is like a medicine that is known to be corrupted, but adulterated to an unknown degree. This redefining of “pure in all ages” as to mean “essentially pure” was a novel and dangerous approach as Presbyterian historian, Gary North explained,

How pure is pure? If there are errors in the existing texts, then this statement by the Confession regarding their preservation in history is called into question. At the very least, defining “pure” becomes mandatory. But if the historical texts were copied faithfully, and errors have nevertheless been found, this calls into question the meaning of “immediately inspired.” Inspiration no longer means absolutely accurate, and without absolute accuracy, the judicial authority of the Bible is undermined. This moves the source of law away from the Bible as God’s authoritative word to man and his authoritative word. This is where higher critics of the Bible want to move it<sup>112</sup>.

Warfield also failed to grasp that Protestantism is predicated on the presupposition that the authority of Scripture stands prior to that of tradition and church. By his rational logic, Warfield inverted this by embracing the enlightenment presupposition of segregating theology from the text critical issues and was willing to redefine providence to keep staggering in his faith. Instead of *Sola Scriptura* we now have *Solo Scriptura*, where Scripture becomes increasingly relative. Now, the Warfieldian Confession could

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<sup>111</sup> Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899), 12.

<sup>112</sup> Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church*, (Tyler: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), Chapter Three.

be expressed better that, “God has kept His Word ‘hidden’ in all ages.” Lutheran writer, Preus, however, rightly argues that “it is as needless and foolish to suppose that we must have the autographa today as to think that we need the cup from which Christ drank before the Eucharist can be rightly celebrated<sup>113</sup>.” Gary La More comments,

Having been encouraged by A.A. Hodge to defend the Princeton view of verbal inspiration against an attack by the critical theories of Charles A. Briggs, Warfield found himself on the horns of a dilemma... Warfield’s solution was to shift his doctrine of inerrancy to include only the original autographa; no longer holding to the belief in the inerrancy of the Bible of the Reformers, the Traditional Text. Thus he moved that if the locus of providence were now centered in restoration via “Enlightenment” textual criticism, rather than preservation of the traditional texts, then we need not concern ourselves with the criticisms lodged at the text of Scripture presently (and historically!) used in the Church<sup>114</sup>.

Warfield now argued that textual criticism is the methodology to determine the true text, as he said, “So far from the Bible being less subject to criticism than other books, we are bound to submit its unique claims to a criticism of unique rigor. Criticism is the mode of procedure by which we assure ourselves that it is what it claims to be<sup>115</sup>.” He also seeks to comfort his readers by citing the Unitarian Scholar, Ezra Abbott’s assurance,

Dr. Ezra Abbot was accustomed to say that about nineteen-twentieths of them have so little support that, although they are various readings, no one would think of them as rival readings; and nineteen-twentieths of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would cause no appreciable difference in the sense of the passages where they occur<sup>116</sup>.

Warfield admits that he was arguing a prevailing view of the Reformed Church,

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<sup>113</sup> Citing Dannhauer in Robert D. Preus. *The Inspiration of Scripture*, 49.

<sup>114</sup> Gary La More, *B.B. Warfield and His Followers*, (Scarborough: Grace Missionary Baptist Church, 2007), 27-28.

<sup>115</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Rights of Criticism,” *The Presbyterian Observer*, (Apr. 14, 1892), 2-3.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

Reverence for the Word of God, perversely but not unnaturally exercised, erected the standard or received text into the norm of a true text; and although preparations for critical editions began very early, and were seriously undertaken by the editors of Walton's "Polyglot" (1657), yet many years passed away before the hardening bondage to the received text could be shaken, and it was not until 1831 that it was entirely broken by the issue of Lachmann's first edition<sup>117</sup>.

Incredibly, Warfield also accepts that the Revised Version was more in line with the Romanist Douay Bible,

I have been surprised, in comparing the Revised Testament with other versions, to find how many of the changes, which are important and valuable, have been anticipated by the Rhemish (Roman Catholic) translation, which now forms a part of what is known as the Douay Bible. ... And yet a careful comparison of these new translations with the Rhemish Testament, shows them, in many instances to be simply a return to this old version, and leads us to think that possibly there were as finished scholars three hundred years ago as now, and nearly as good apparatus for the proper rendering of the original text<sup>118</sup>.

Theodore P. Letis, contends that Warfield's importation of critical methodology to Princeton ultimately backfired, leading to an increasing historical scepticism,

It is my conviction that Warfield himself represents a paradigm shift at Princeton, away from the tradition of Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge... Warfield's wholly new paradigm, which relegated final authority to the *autographa*, rather than to the *apographa*, left Princeton vulnerable to the fragmenting efforts of the early twentieth century Biblical criticism. Warfield probably never foresaw that his quest for the historical *text* (for it is here where he would find *inerrancy*) would evolve into the quest for the historical *Jesus* at Princeton, just as it did in Britain in the eighteenth century and in Germany in the nineteenth century<sup>119</sup>.

Warfield gave himself to studying textual criticism in his graduate studies and felt that these tools were "neutral." Letis accuses him of being influenced by "the Enlightenment," because this approach "demanded that Scripture be approached 'as any

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 216.

<sup>118</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Collection of Opinions*, Vol. II, 52-53.

<sup>119</sup> Theodore P. Letis, "Brevard Childs and the Protestant Dogmatists: A Window to a New Paradigm of Biblical Interpretation," in *The Churchman*, Volume 105, Number 3, (1991): 622.



other literature,' and it legitimized the use of the radical technique of conjectural emendation - the very foundation of the higher critical method<sup>120</sup>."

Warfield concedes in his book on Textual Criticism that "the current New Testament text must be adjudged, in comparison with a well-printed modern book, extremely corrupt" but he argues this can be overcome for "if we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must render the opposite verdict and declare it to be marvelously correct<sup>121</sup>." After warmly welcoming Westcott and Hort's Theory in *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, Warfield soon began to assert that textual critical methodology clearly demonstrates the inspiration of one of the resurrection accounts (Mark 16:9-20) as "no part of the word of God. Warfield now states, "we are not then to ascribe to these verses the authority due to God's word<sup>122</sup>."

As Letis says, "Hence, once committed to the "scientific method" Warfield could not pull out of the bargain even if he wanted to. He had to abide by what science said. Hence, in order to have his inerrant autographs he was quite willing to give up even portions of the hitherto sanctioned canon of the New Testament, even when it touched on such important theology as the resurrection!<sup>123</sup> " Warfield implicitly accepted that we would never now know the exact Words of the original text as he said, "The autographic text of the New Testament is distinctly within the reach of

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<sup>120</sup> Theodore P. Letis, "Don't you believe in the Inerrancy of the Original Autographs?" in *Christianity & Society*, Volume 14 - Number 43 (October 2004): 5.

<sup>121</sup> B. B. Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1887), 12.

<sup>122</sup> B. B. Warfield, "The Genuineness of Mark 16:9-20," in *Sunday School Times*, Vol. XXIV (December 1882): 755.

<sup>123</sup> Theodore P. Letis, "B. B. Warfield, Common-Sense Philosophy and Biblical Criticism," in *American Presbyterians*, Volume 69 - Number 3 (Fall 1991): 176.

criticism *in so immensely the greater part of the volume*, that we cannot despair of restoring ... His Book, word for word, as He gave it by inspiration to men<sup>124</sup>.” Now, on the basis of rationalist textual criticism, Warfield declared un-canonical what the true Church has declared canonical for centuries. By this action, Warfield unwittingly opened the door to destructive higher criticism, as the history of Princeton delineates. He was essentially defending upon Confessional dogma which itself was derived from and defended a certain textual tradition as authentic. However, Warfield was in accord with liberal critics who expunged orthodox readings based upon evidential witnesses of manuscripts outside of the scope of that tradition.

If conservatives such as Warfield asserted *Sola Scriptura*, yet undermined the sacred status of the textual foundation for the WCF, then it was impossible to defend the doctrine of the WCF as the truth.

A secular historian, Harriet A. Harris writing on Fundamentalism correctly observed the historic shift by Princeton,

A few groups still insist on the Authorized Version, but the official doctrine of most fundamentalists and evangelicals has been influenced by the Princeton doctrine of inerrancy, according to which only the original autographs are fully inspired and inerrant<sup>125</sup>.

Another Neo-Evangelical writer, Dewey Beagle affirms this new development,

When it became clear to lovers of Scripture that copies of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament contained some errors, it was quite natural to transfer the quality of accuracy or inerrancy to the original writings. Obviously one reason for this new emphasis was to protect the honor and perfection of God<sup>126</sup>.

The liberal American historian, Preserved Smith (1847-1927) also observed,

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<sup>124</sup> B. B. Warfield, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (1886; 7th ed., London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907) 15

<sup>125</sup> Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 8.

<sup>126</sup> Dewey Beagle, *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 156.

Warfield in an article in the *Presbyterian Review* stated the doctrine [inerrancy] is not concerned with the accuracy of our present Bible, but interests itself in affirming a perfection of the original autographs which has in some cases at least been lost in transmission...None the less does the new theory depart widely from the confessional doctrine? That the Word of God as we now have it in Scripture is infallible...this is the affirmation of the Confession<sup>127</sup>.

Neo-Evangelical historian, Mark Noll writes in his book, *Faith and Criticism*, concerning the approach of Hodge and Warfield ,

Hodge and Warfield, on the other hand, profess more willingness to let “induction” take its course and (perhaps) to doubt what merely appears to be “the plain implication” of biblical passages. For them, the recovery of the texts “in all their real affirmations” is the key. They stress that the books of the Bible “were not designed to teach philosophy, science, or human history as such,” and that the writers depended on “sources and methods themselves fallible”..... it would seem that even the words of Jesus need to be studied inductively concerning “their natural and intended sense” about the composition of the Old Testament...It left open a limited flexibility toward criticism which reappears from time to time in the later development of these evangelical positions<sup>128</sup>.

Mark Noll concludes,

Yet their work as a whole pushed further into the background the older view of the Bible as a divine gift from heaven<sup>129</sup>.

Indeed, this position was new even to the Princeton faculty, as Kim Riddlebarger admits,

Warfield’s championing of the Westcott-Hort methodology *does* represent a very significant movement beyond previous boundaries at Princeton. Clearly, Warfield was much more amenable to textual criticism as practiced by the Germans (as seen

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<sup>127</sup>Cited in Theodore P. Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, (Fairhill: The Institute for Renaissance and Reformation Biblical Studies, 2000), 53-54.

<sup>128</sup>Mark Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship and the Bible in America*, (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 26.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid, 69.

through the grid of Westcott and Hort) than were his predecessors, specifically Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge and C. W. Hodge<sup>130</sup>.

Professor Brevard Childs of Yale Divinity School observes that, “very few of those interested in Warfield have picked up his radical reinterpretation of N.T. text criticism. I continue to be amazed that he had such success, at least for a while, in convincing rather traditional Reformed groups of his position and even in making an explicit adjustment in the creedal formulations<sup>131</sup>.” Professor John Vander Stelt of Dordt College also observes of Warfield, “The use of “autographs” in his view and those who came after him, especially at Westminster Theological Seminary, has always been baffling to me. It shows what compromise what Enlightenment (in terms of science about scientific criticism) may compel one to resort to in order to find an island of so-called safety/security<sup>132</sup>.”

Warfield became bolder and soon claimed that opponents of Westcott and Hort such as Dean Burgeon, will now “pass quietly away and leave no successors<sup>133</sup>.” By 1911, the sons of the 19th century N.T. scholar W.F. Moulton, who had himself worked on the revision committee of the *Revised Version* of 1881, boasted in their book *The History of the English Bible*,

Intelligent people are familiar with its rendering, and ignorant prejudice against its more startling changes of text in the New Testament seems to have died away. In the matter of text, indeed, an epoch was marked by the British and Foreign Bible

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<sup>130</sup> Kim Riddlebarger, *The Lion of Princeton: Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield on Apologetics, Theological Method and Polemics*, Doctoral Thesis (1997) online at <http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/b-b-warfield-the-lion-of-pr/> accessed 20 January 2009.

<sup>131</sup> Adam Fox, *John Mill and Richard Bentley: A Study of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, 1675-1729*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), 50 cited in Theodore P. Letis, *The Majority Text*, (Grand Rapids: Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, 1987), 125

<sup>132</sup> Reviews in Theodore P. Letis, *The Majority Text*, (Grand Rapids: Institute for Biblical Textual Studies, 1987), 216.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

Society's centenary publication of Nestle's edition of the Greek Testament which was almost an official registration of the decrease of the "Received Text." Dean Burgon's thunder rolls no more, and no scholar of any reputation remains to plead for his views. This fact alone, of course, disposes of the only serious attack upon the Revised New Testament.

Princeton's A. A. Hodge (1823 – 1886) also was caught up in revising the traditional interpretation of the Confession. He argued in his commentary in 1874 that "pure in all ages" now meant "a state of essential purity" where "the essential integrity of our text is established" as he says,

That the original sacred text has come down to us in a state of essential purity. That the Scriptures should be translated into the vernacular languages of all people, and copies put into the hands of all capable of reading them.

The true text of the ancient Scriptures is ascertained by means of a careful collation and comparison of the...Ancient manuscripts. The oldest existing Hebrew manuscripts date from the ninth or tenth century. The oldest Greek manuscripts date from the fourth to the sixth century. Many hundreds of these have been collated by eminent scholars in forming the text of modern Hebrew and Greek Testaments. The differences are found to be unimportant, and the essential integrity of our text is established<sup>134</sup>.

Hodge was even willing to concede that the original autographs were not inerrant as he said,

That it is even possible that some of the autographs, if we had them, might not be altogether free from errors as arise from the slip of a pen, as the apostles and ["had"] amanuensis who were not inspired<sup>135</sup>.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF THE WARFIELD SHIFT

The fruits of importing evidence from outside the Bible into the exegesis of biblical texts to "compartmentalize" inspiration and preservation soon led Princeton to

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<sup>134</sup>Archibald Alexander Hodge, *A commentary on the Confession of faith, with questions for theological students and Bible classes, with appendix*, (Philadelphia, Presb. Bd. of Pub, 1874), 65.

<sup>135</sup>Lefferts Loetscher, *Facing the Enlightenment and Pietism: Archibald Alexander and the Founding of Princeton Theological Seminary*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 288.

make at least two crucial compromises in other areas. Warfield, following his philosophical mentor, James McCosh, was now also open to the possibility of theistic evolution. Even the more reserved Princeton theologian, Charles Hodge sought to find a compromise with “science” and posited a day-age theory concerning the opening chapters of Genesis<sup>136</sup>. By Warfield’s approach, Princeton uncritically capitulated to the prevailing nineteenth-century understanding of the natural sciences. As Letis explained of Warfield, “it was precisely *because* he was so conservative in other respects that he was so able to succeed where others with the taint of liberalism might have failed<sup>137</sup>.” Soon, Princeton theologians would take this logic to its conclusion and declare that the “objective scientific evidence” made it irrational to believe in a universal Flood, miracles, the virgin birth, the resurrection, and the ascension. Within one generation, Princeton was infiltrated with liberalism and ultimately destroyed. David Norris observes, “Warfield’s book on biblical inspiration is still hailed as a ‘classic’, but his viewpoint has done more to undermine confidence in Scripture than almost any other in the last 150 years or so<sup>138</sup>.” Edward F Hills comments of Warfield’s influence,

Dr. Warfield’s treatment of the New Testament text illustrates this cleavage in his thinking. In the realm of dogmatics he agreed with the Westminster Confession that the New Testament text had been “kept pure in all ages” by God’s “singular care and providence,” but in the realm of New Testament textual criticism he agreed with Westcott and Hort in ignoring God’s providence and even went so far as to assert that the same methods were to be applied to the text of the New Testament that would be applied to the text of a morning newspaper. It was to bridge the gap between his dogmatics and his New Testament textual criticism that he suggested that God had worked providentially through Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort to preserve the New Testament text. But this suggestion leads to

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<sup>136</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 1, (London: James Clark, 1960 edition) 570–74.

<sup>137</sup> Theodore P. Letis, “Don’t you believe in the Inerrancy of the Original Autographs?” in *Christianity & Society*, Vol 14 - No 43 (October 2004): 6.

<sup>138</sup> David W. Norris, *The Big Picture: The Authority and Integrity of the Authentic Word of God*, (Cannock: Authentic Word, 2004), 296.

conclusions which are extremely bizarre and inconsistent. It would have us believe that during the manuscript period orthodox Christians corrupted the New Testament text, that the text used by the Protestant Reformers was the worst of all, and that the True Text was not restored until the 19th century, when Tregelles brought it forth out of the Pope's library, when Tischendorf rescued it from a waste basket on Mt. Sinai, and when Westcott and Hort were providentially guided to construct a theory of it which ignores God's special providence and treats the text of the New Testament like the text of any other ancient book. But if the True New Testament Text was lost for 1500 years, how can we be sure that it has ever been found again<sup>139</sup>?

One liberal Neo-Evangelical historian, John J. Brogan candidly admits,

The results of textual criticism in the past two centuries have caused evangelicals to reformulate their doctrine of Scripture in several ways. First, the very existence of textual variants in the manuscript tradition forced most evangelicals to abandon their arguments for the inerrancy of any particular text (e.g. the TR) or translation (e.g. the KJV). Instead evangelicals were obliged to locate inerrancy in the autographs. But placing the weight of authority of Scripture on the autographs created questions concerning the authority of the Bibles currently used by the Church....How do we explain that except for a small handful of people who were permitted to read possibly one of the autographs, everyone has heard and responded to God through reading or hearing "errant" copies of the biblical text, including the translations based on the "scandalously corrupt" Greek text used by most evangelicals today?...When scholars talk only of the "inerrant autographs," people are not told anything about the Bibles they actually use. Why should people have confidence in a Bible that was once – long ago and far away – inerrant, when all they have before them is an imperfect translation of an imperfect copy? At best, the theological construct of an inerrant autograph is only a semantic chimera that defends an indefensible position. At worst, it is an intellectually dishonest escape from critical thinking<sup>140</sup>.

Other conservative writers were as weak as Warfield at this time. A. T.

Pierson commented in 1910,

Inspiration is affirmed, of course, only of the original documents, now no longer extant. Many mistakes may have been made by copyists, and some interpolations by officious scribes and translators are fallible. It is the part of reverent criticism to

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<sup>139</sup> Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended*, (Des Moines: Christian Research Press, 1973),109-110.

<sup>140</sup> John J. Brogan, "Can I have your Autograph?" in Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguélez, Dennis L. Okholm, *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 108-110.

seek, by careful examination and comparison of all existing documents, to detect errors and restore as far as possible the Scriptures in their original purity<sup>141</sup>.

Even in the original *The Fundamentals; A Testimony to the Truth* (1917) Sir Robert Anderson says in his article “Christ and Criticism,”

If a personal word may be pardoned in conclusion, the writer would appeal to every book he has written in proof that he is no champion of a rigid, traditional “orthodoxy.” With a single limitation, he would advocate full and free criticism of Holy Scripture. And that one limitation is that the words of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be deemed a bar to criticism and “an end of controversy” on every subject expressly dealt with in His teaching<sup>142</sup>.

Some of the early fundamentalist leaders such as James Gray ironically saw the dangers of liberal attacks on the Bible’s words but seemed blind to the dangers of Warfield’s position,

Does not competent scholarship today affirm that as to the New Testament at least, we have in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand the very word of that original text?.....Can even God Himself give a thought to man without the words that clothe it? Are not the two inseparable, as much so “as a sum and its figures, or a tune and its notes?” Has any case been known in human history where a healthy mind has been able to create ideas without expressing them to its own perception?<sup>143</sup>

#### CHALLENGE TO WARFIELD’S SLIDE

The slide did not go unchecked completely. Counterpoised against this slide were some formidable champions of orthodoxy such as Robert L. Dabney (1820-1898) the noted American Presbyterian scholar. He boldly opposed the rationalistic background of modern textual criticism and warned that those who accepted the critical

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<sup>141</sup> A. T. Pierson, *Knowing the Scriptures: Rules and Methods of Bible Study*, (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1910) 21.

<sup>142</sup> *The Fundamentals; A Testimony to the Truth*, (reprint Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1917) 126.

<sup>143</sup> James Gray cited in Eldred C. Vanderlaan, *Fundamentalism Versus Modernism*, (New York: H.W. Wilson, 1925) 158, 162.



text were adopting it from “the mint of infidel rationalism<sup>144</sup>.” Dabney went on to argue,

We call these the opinions now fashionable; for those who watch the course of this art are aware that there is as truly a fashion in it, infecting its votaries, as in ladies’ bonnets, medicines or cravats [neck scarves]. ... The minds for which criticism retains its fascination are usually of that peculiar and ‘crotchety’ type found among antiquarians. The intelligent reader is, therefore, not surprised to find, along with much labor and learning, a ‘plentiful lack’ of sober and convincing common sense. ... We shall find them continually varying, each one obnoxious to grave objections, and the question still unsettled. ... Their common traits may be said to be an almost contemptuous dismissal of the received text, as unworthy not only of confidence, but almost of notice<sup>145</sup>.

It is also noteworthy that the true remnant Church of God reacted negatively to any attack on the Received Text. When the sceptic, Edward Gibbon, in his classic work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, noted that the *Comma Johanneum* of 1 John 5.7–8, was not authentic it caused uproar in British public opinion of the eighteenth century. As Bentley records, “Others had done [this] before him, but only in academic and learned circles. Gibbon did so before the general public, in language designed to offend<sup>146</sup>.” The Revised Version of 1881 itself was a failure in supplanting the Authorized Version. N. M. Wheeler, a professor of Lawrence University, pertinently observed in the very next issue of the *Sunday School Times*, “we must ask the critics every morning what is the latest conclusion in order to know what is that Scripture

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<sup>144</sup> Robert Dabney, “The Doctrinal Various Readings of the New Testament Greek,” *Discussions Evangelical and Theological*, 361; this first appeared in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, (April 1871)

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 350-354

<sup>146</sup> James Bentley, *Secrets of Mount Sinai: The Story of the Codex Sinaiticus* (London: Orbis, 1985) 29.

inspired of God<sup>147</sup>.” Alfred Martin the former President of Moody Bible Institute in his 1951 doctoral dissertation to the faculty of the Graduate School of Dallas Theological Seminary also warned,

At precisely the time when liberalism was carrying the field in the English churches the theory of Westcott and Hort received wide acclaim. These are not isolated facts. Recent contributions on the subject – that is, in the present century – following mainly the Westcott – Hort principles and method, have been made largely by men who deny the inspiration of the Bible<sup>148</sup>.

Even some Neo-Evangelicals such as Zane C. Hodges could see the danger,

Modern textual criticism is psychologically ‘addicted’ to Westcott and Hort. Westcott and Hort, in turn, were rationalists in their approach to the textual problem in the New Testament and employed techniques within which rationalism and every other kind of bias are free to operate. The result of it all is a methodological quagmire where objective controls on the conclusions of critics are nearly nonexistent. It goes without saying that no Bible-believing Christian who is willing to extend the implications of his faith to textual matters can have the slightest grounds for confidence in contemporary critical texts<sup>149</sup>.

Louis F. DeBoer writing for The American Presbyterian Church explains,

Warfield studied in Germany and was exposed to the techniques of their rationalistic scholars. The idea was to be current in the latest scholarship. Unfortunately, God does not necessarily bless such rationalizations for sitting at the feet of heretics, and Warfield wound up adopting their methodology. Warfield’s famed defense of the Scriptures was actually an exercise in higher criticism. He postulated that the Bible should be treated like any other book, such as the Koran or the Book of Mormon, or the writings of Aristotle or Shakespeare, and should be tested for veracity by the tools of reason. The only difference was that Warfield concluded that the Bible passed muster and was a credible book. Warfield then further concluded that since the Bible passed the test of reason as a trustworthy book, and since it claimed to be inspired, therefore it must be inspired. Faith had nothing to do with it. The Bible was now propped up by the conclusions of science and reason. The foundations for our belief in the Scriptures were now settled in

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<sup>147</sup> N. M. Wheeler, “Uncanonical Inspiration,” in *Sunday School Times*, Vol. 25 (January 1883): 4 cited in Letis, “B. B. Warfield, Common-Sense Philosophy, and Biblical Criticism,” 181.

<sup>148</sup> Alfred Martin, “A Critical Examination of the Westcott-Hort Textual Theory.” Th.D. Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, May 1951, 70.

<sup>149</sup> Zane C. Hodges, “Rationalism and Contemporary New Testament Textual Criticism,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, (January 1971): 27-35

man's reason. A century later the doctrine of an inspired, inerrant Bible is in tatters even in evangelical circles. Many evangelical seminaries no longer even teach that position<sup>150</sup>.

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<sup>150</sup>Louis F. DeBoer, "The Framework Hypothesis," online at [http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/framework\\_hyothesis.htm](http://www.americanpresbyterianchurch.org/framework_hyothesis.htm) accessed 20 January 2009.

### III PRESERVATION VIEWS TODAY

With the advent of Higher Criticism and Modernism we see the logical conclusion of the modern textual critics and the evangelicals and reformed who adopted their view of Scripture. Warfield embraced the ability of apostate editors of the New Testament text to restore the words of God. This tragic legacy of this Warfieldian creedal revision and the “lost Princeton Bible” can be seen in the fact that most of the leading Fundamentalist Movements and Colleges are now openly admitting they do not know where the Words of God are today. The truth is that there is not a single word from even one original manuscript available to anyone anywhere in the world and those who say we must compare the TR with the originals could not produce an original if their life depended on it.

One of the leading anti-KJV seminaries is Central Baptist Theological Seminary, whose faculty edited a book *One Bible Only?* in which they state, “the doctrine of preservation was not a doctrine of the ancient church,” and “we might have lost a few words through negligence,” and “not only is Scripture without a verse to explain how God will preserve His Word, but no statement in Scripture teaches that God did preserve perfectly the original text of Scripture.<sup>151</sup>” Are we to understand that God has promised to preserve His pure originals impurely? These men who deny the preservation of all of God’s Words for us today because of “history” or “textual science” and textual “uncertainties” need to be told, “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?” (Mark 12:24). A stark warning

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<sup>151</sup> Roy Beacham, *One Bible Only? Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 93, 95, 99.

of the dangers of compromising on the doctrine of preservation is the fact that two of the authors of this book, Edward Glenny and Larry Pettegrew have subsequently both rejected Fundamentalism completely and now teach at openly Neo-Evangelical Seminaries<sup>152</sup>.

This denial of the historic and Biblical view of preservation is a new view in Fundamentalist circles and has been popularized by leading Neo-Evangelical Dallas Theological Seminary professor, Daniel B. Wallace whose textual heroes includes “Jerome and Origen for their handling of the textual variants in the pursuit of truth” and who says, “the practice of textual criticism neither needs nor deserves any theological presuppositions. For example, I am not convinced that the Bible speaks of its own preservation. That doctrine was first introduced in the Westminster Confession, but it is not something that can be found in scripture.” Ironically, Wallace fails to discern that this denial is itself a theological presupposition of his textual criticism, and thus a wholly self-defeating claim. Wallace also argues,

My own views on inerrancy and inspiration have changed over the years. I still embrace those doctrines, but I don’t define them the way I used to. .... I would say that if inerrancy is elevated to the status of a prime doctrine, that’s when one gets on a slippery slope. But if a student views doctrines as concentric circles, with the cardinal doctrines occupying the center, then if the more peripheral doctrines are challenged, this does not have an effect on the core. At bottom, theology and faith do have a place in biblical studies. They can function as sort of a quality control on our exegesis. But they cannot be used as a trump card that allows us to ignore the data<sup>153</sup>.

William Combs admits the novelty of this new position,

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<sup>152</sup> Edward Glenny is now Professor of New Testament and Greek at Northwestern College, St Paul's. Larry Pettegrew teaches now at The Master’s Seminary.

<sup>153</sup>“Interview with Dan Wallace” on Evangelical Textual Criticism, Monday, March 20, 2006, online at <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2006/03/interview-with-dan-wallace.html> accessed 1 January 2009.

In an article entitled “Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament Textual Criticism,” by Daniel B. Wallace, we find what is apparently the first definitive, systematic denial of a doctrine of preservation of Scripture. He has been joined in his view by W. Edward Glenny. . . . The position of Wallace and Glenny appears to be a rather novel one. . . . They have eliminated any vestige of the preservation of Scripture as a doctrine<sup>154</sup>.

So, according to Wallace and Glenny, God Sovereignly and purposefully allowed His Words not to be preserved, but inspired Scripture that, on the face of it, seemed to fool most believers that He promised He would guarantee its own preservation. These two scholars “discovered” this view that Moses, David, Paul, and Peter all knew that the Words of God that they wrote had little or no guarantee of survival for the future usage of the saints despite urging future generations to study these soon to be lost Words.

The consequence of this falling away in the pulpit is that fewer and fewer professing Christians believe in the inerrancy of Scripture every day. This anti-perfect preservation presupposition also affected former pastor of the Princeton Baptist Church and famed textual critic, Bart Ehrman to the point that he now today confesses to being an agnostic. He pertinently observed how the problem of a Bible with errors in it affected him in a recent book *Misquoting Jesus*,

If one wants to insist that God inspired the very words of scripture, what would be the point if we don't have the very words of scripture? ... It's a bit hard to know what the words of the Bible mean if we don't even know what the words are!

This became a problem for my view of inspiration, for I came to realize that it would have been no more difficult for God to preserve the words of scripture than it would have been for him to inspire them in the first place. If he wanted his people to have his words, surely he would have given to them (and possibly even given them the words in a language they could understand, rather than Greek and Hebrew). The fact that we don't have the words surely must show, I reasoned, that he did not preserve them for us. And if he didn't perform that miracle, there seemed

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<sup>154</sup> William Combs, *DBSJ* 5 (Fall 2000): 5.

to be no reason to think that he performed the earlier miracle of inspiring those words.<sup>155</sup>

He also observed,

The only reason (I came to think) for God to inspire the Bible would be so that his people would have his actual words; but if he really wanted people to have his actual words, surely he would have miraculously preserved those words, just as he had miraculously inspired them in the first place. Given the circumstance that he didn't preserve the words, the conclusion seemed inescapable to me that he hadn't gone to the trouble of inspiring them<sup>156</sup>.

Another leading textual critic and Senior Lecturer in New Testament at the University of Birmingham, David Parker argues similarly,

The concept of the Gospel that is fixed in shape, authoritative, and final as a piece of literature has to be abandoned....The [free] text indicates that to at least some early Christians, it was more important to hand on the spirit of Jesus' teaching than to remember the letter.... The material about Jesus was preserved in an interpretive rather than an exact fashion<sup>157</sup>.

The most prominent Fundamentalist university, Bob Jones University (BJU) openly endorses the Alexandrian Texts as, "a whole, superior to the text based upon manuscripts of the Middle Ages<sup>158</sup>." BJU's Samuel Schnaiter even argues, "We have already seen that no manuscript has ever been promoted as perfect (though Sinaiticus and Vaticanus came as close as any)<sup>159</sup>." Indeed, BJU was one of the educational

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<sup>155</sup> Bart D Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 11.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>157</sup> D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), cited by Eldon Jay Epp, "Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism" in David Alan Black, editor, *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 57.

<sup>158</sup> Bob Jones University. "Position of the Bible Department of Bob Jones University on the Scripture (mimeograph)." Office of the President, no date. Printed in Daniel L Turner, *Standing Without Apology: The History of Bob Jones University*, (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1997), 322-3.

<sup>159</sup> Samuel Schnaiter and Ron Tagliapietra, *Bible Preservation and the Providence of God*, (Philadelphia: Xlibris Corp., 2002), 154.

institutions to assist the Lockman Foundation's publication of the NASV in 1971. Fred Moritz, the Executive Director of Baptist World Missions in a BJU Publication states, "the debate whether to use the Textus Receptus, the Majority Text, or the Critical Text should not be a source of bitter contention. Neither should it be a test of fellowship among brethren. This is not to demean the textual variants. The issue is worthy of continual study, and scholars should pursue the accurate wording of the original writings in those areas where uncertainty exists<sup>160</sup>."

Samuel Schnaiter foolishly claims, "that we must be careful to distinguish between textual purity and the purity of the sense of any given message<sup>161</sup>." However, he does not explain how if we don't even know what the Words are, then how can we be expected to know the meaning? If the Bible we have today has a text corrupted by mistakes that we do not know where or how many and cannot ever hope to know, then it ceases to be unconditionally authoritative. This would leave us in a quandary as we can say that Scripture is authoritative, but we cannot say with any authority what Scripture is. Now Scripture must be validated and endorsed by our own human judgment before we can accept it as true. However, as the apostate textual critics who control the development of these texts today lack the necessary spiritual insight and personal inerrancy in judgment, they invariably come to a false and mistaken subjective judgment.

In 1999, a concerted attack was coordinated by BJU through the World Congress of Fundamentalists against the KJV. James B Williams (General Editor) and

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<sup>160</sup> Fred Moritz, *Contending for the Faith*, (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 2000), 92.

<sup>161</sup> S. E. Schnaiter, "Review Article: *New Age Bible Versions*," *DBSJ* 2 (Fall 1997):113.



Randolph Shaylor (Managing Editor) published a book entitled, *God's Word in Our Hands: The Bible Preserved For Us*,<sup>162</sup> a sequel of the earlier publication, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*.<sup>163</sup> These books are especially provocative and given to overstatement and *non sequitur*. In the Introduction to this book, Dr. J.B. Williams called those who defend the KJV as a “cancerous sore” that has resulted in “a deplorable condition in Fundamentalism” and a “mass of misinformation.” Williams is so lacking in discernment that, despite the clear heretical and liberal beliefs of Westcott and Hort he claims, “these men are now with the Lord<sup>164</sup>.” These authors also argue against preservation in the Traditional Text but in all the extant manuscripts. John C. Mincy, in his chapter, “Preservation of the Copies,” writes,

To say that God has preserved His words in a particular manuscript or collation of several manuscripts is to go beyond what God has revealed in His Word, and beyond the results of history and biblical study. . . . It is better to conclude that God has not chosen to preserve His words in one particular place, text-type, or manuscript, but through the thousands of manuscripts that agree so closely. A comparison of all the manuscripts shows incredible agreement, and where differences do occur, we are usually left with two good choices and so must determine the best reading and maintain the other as a variant reading, knowing that God's words are preserved in them. This enforces the fact that God has truly preserved His words for us today.<sup>165</sup>

## CURRENT UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE TEXT

The cumulative efforts of all the textual critics of the last hundred and fifty years have resulted in maximum uncertainty as to the original reading of the New

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<sup>162</sup> James B. Williams and Randolph Shaylor, ed, *God's Word in Our Hands: The Bible Preserved for Us*, (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2003).

<sup>163</sup> James B. Williams, ed, *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man*, (Greenville: Ambassador-Emerald International, 1999).

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>165</sup> John C Mincy, “Preservation of the Copies,” *God's Word in Our Hands*, 152.

Testament text. Even the famed, “Alexandrian Text” of Westcott and Hort is clearly an eclectic compilation as, Hort himself admitted, because none of the surviving manuscripts contained a pure Alexandrian text. Indeed, the 3,000 differences in Vaticanus and Sinaiticus in just the Gospels show that if these are the “most reliable” manuscripts then the term reliable is very elastic indeed. The essential choice is between the Traditional Text manuscripts which are internally consistent and a handful minority of slightly older manuscripts that differ widely from one another. Dr. A. J. Gordon once correctly observed, “To deny that the Holy Spirit speaks in Scripture is an intelligible proposition, but to admit that He speaks, it is impossible to know what He says except as we have His Words.<sup>166</sup>” David Cloud words bear repeating here, “There is something wrong with a position on Bible preservation that leaves a man with no preserved Bible<sup>167</sup>.”

Textual critics agree that it is impossible for us to have in our hand the Words of God today. Modern scholarship ultimately denies Biblical preservation and replaces it with human uncertainty. When man assumes his autonomous human reason to be the final reference point in predication on textual issues, he is then confronted with an ever-present philosophical dilemma. Such an approach implicitly assumes that a finite man, beginning totally independently and autonomously, can forge a path towards ultimate truth. However, the Scriptures warn that we cannot trust man, for he will lie (Rom 3:4) and the arm of flesh will ultimately fail us (2 Chron 32:8). However such a framework is doomed from the beginning as man is finite and, as such, has nothing toward which he can point with certainty. This is even more of a problem

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<sup>166</sup> Eldred C. Vanderlaan, *Fundamentalism Versus Modernism*, 162.

<sup>167</sup> David W. Cloud, “The Heresy of Believing the KJV-TR is the Preserved Word of God” (Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 1999); available online at <http://wayoflife.org/~dcloud/fbns/heresyofbelieving.htm>.

when, as the textual critics agree, the textual words cannot be ascertained scientifically in the extant textual evidence. This is because certitude of textual knowledge using this approach would require a person to know *everything* before they could truly know *anything*. However, as infinite knowledge is not possible for finite beings outside of Scripture it is invalidated epistemologically speaking for any textual critic to utilize his subjective opinions as a reference point for intrinsic and transcriptional probabilities of textual variants.

Wilbur Pickering explains that as long the textual materials are handled in this way “we will never be sure about the precise wording of the Greek text” because,

Even where there is unanimous testimony for the wording of the text, the canons of internal evidence do not preclude the possibility that that unanimous testimony might be wrong. Once internal evidence is accepted as the way to determine the text there is no basis in principle for objecting to conjectural emendation. Hence no part of the Text is safe. (Even if it is required that a proposed reading be attested by at least one manuscript, a new Papyrus may come to light tomorrow with new variants to challenge the unanimous witness of the rest, and so on.

This is attested by the leading textual critics on the last century. Rendel Harris in 1908 declared that the New Testament text was, “More than ever, and perhaps finally, unsettled<sup>168</sup>.” In 1910, Conybeare states that “the ultimate (New Testament) text, if there ever was one that deserves to be so called, is forever irrecoverable.<sup>169</sup>” Another critic, Merrill M. Parvis admits, “Each one of the critical texts differ quite markedly from all the others. This fact certainly suggests that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to recover the original text of the New Testament<sup>170</sup>.” In 1941 Kirsopp Lake, after a life

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<sup>168</sup> Rendel Harris, *Side Lights on New Testament Research*, (London: Kingsgate Press, 1908), 3.

<sup>169</sup> F.C. Conybeare, *History of New Testament Criticism*, (London: Watts & Co, 1910), 129.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, 397.

time spent in the study of the New Testament text, argues, “In spite of the claims of Westcott and Hort and of von Soden, we do not know the original form of the Gospels, and it is quite likely that we never shall<sup>171</sup>.” Bart Ehrman states, “there is always a degree of doubt, an element of subjectivity<sup>172</sup>.” Kurt Aland declares that the latest Text of the United Bible Societies is “not a static entity” and “every change in it is open to challenge.<sup>173</sup>” G. Zuntz admits that “the optimism of the earlier editors has given way to that skepticism which inclines towards regarding ‘the original text’ as an unattainable mirage”<sup>174</sup>. Earnest Caldman Colwell admitted in 1947 that “no objective method can take us back through successive reconstructions to the original<sup>175</sup>.” Robert M. Grant, a well-known critical scholar, says,

The primary goal of New Testament textual study remains the recovery of what the New Testament writers wrote. We have already suggested that to achieve this goal is well-nigh impossible. Therefore we must be content with what Reinhold Niebuhr and others have called, in other contexts, an ‘impossible possibility.’<sup>176</sup>

K.W. Clark now accepts,

The textual history that the Westcott-Hort text represents is no longer tenable in the light of newer discoveries and fuller textual analysis. In the effort to construct a congruent history, our failure suggests that we have lost the way, that we have

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<sup>171</sup> Kirsopp Lake, *Family 13, The Ferrar Group, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press*, 1941, vii.

<sup>172</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995, p. 315.

<sup>173</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm Eerdmans, 1995), 35.

<sup>174</sup> G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 9.

<sup>175</sup> Earnest Caldman Colwell, “Biblical Criticism: Lower and Higher,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67 (1948):11.

<sup>176</sup> R.M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 51.

reached a dead end, and that only a new and different insight will enable us to break through<sup>177</sup>.

Contemporary liberal Textual Critic, Bruce Metzger, bewails, “Occasionally none of the variant readings will commend itself as original, and he [the textual critic] will be compelled either to choose the reading which he judges to be the least unsatisfactory or to indulge in conjectural emendation . . . one must seek not only to learn what can be known, but also to become aware of what . . . cannot be known<sup>178</sup>.” In a 1994 article, “What Text Can New Testament Textual Criticism Ultimately Reach?,” leading textual critic, William L. Petersen poses the rhetorical question for those who reject providential preservation,

Is the “original” Mark the Mark found in our fourth-century and later manuscripts? Or is it the Mark recovered from the so-called “minor agreements” between Matthew and Luke? And which - if any - of the four extant endings of “Mark” is “original?” And how does the “Secret Gospel of Mark” ... relate to the “original” Mark? It is clear that, without even having to consider individual variants, determining which “Mark” is “original” is a difficult - and perhaps even impossible - task<sup>179</sup>.

Reuben Swanson, one of the most eagerly-read modern critical scholars states, “To believe that we can reconstruct out of fragmentary and late material ‘the original pure text’ is thus a delusion.... There can, therefore, be no agreement among critics as to which reading may have been original<sup>180</sup>.” Dan Wallace argues that, “when we say

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<sup>177</sup> K.W. Clark, “Today's Problems with the Critical Text of the New Testament,” *Transitions in Biblical Scholarship*, ed. J.C.R. Rylaarsdam (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) 161.

<sup>178</sup> Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1992) 246.

<sup>179</sup> Barbara Aland and Joel Delobel, eds., *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis, and Early Church History* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994) 136-37.

<sup>180</sup> *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus: 1 Corinthians* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers/Pasadena: William Carey International University Press, 2003), xxxi.

‘thus says the word of God,’ we have a relative degree of certainty that this is indeed what the original text said<sup>181</sup>.” Wallace tries to comfort us by assuring,

To be sure, we do not know whether we have recovered the exact wording of the original, and we may never know. At the same time, we are getting closer and closer. And no essential belief is affected by any viable variants<sup>182</sup>.

A professed Fundamentalist, William Combs also has given up and states,

While it is not possible to produce a text that is in all points identical to the autographs, nevertheless, carefully produced texts and versions are able to convey God’s truth to the reader<sup>183</sup>.

## MAJORITY TEXT AND PRESERVATION

The “Majority Text” has in recent years become a distinct term from Received Text as a result of the theories of a number of textual scholars. The most well-known advocate of the Majority Text (MT) is Wilbur Pickering, who in 1977 published a book on the subject called *The Identity of the New Testament Text*. Another is Maurice Robinson, the professor of New Testament and Greek at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. The MT is a statistical construct that does not correspond exactly to any known manuscript. The Received Text reflects the text received by the churches, whereas the MT is an artificial construct that is compiled by comparing all known manuscripts with one another and deriving from them the readings that are faithfully represented in the *majority* of extant Greek manuscripts. The MT view also adopts the Warfieldian view of re-interpreting the Westminster Confession. Although it is closer to the Received Text than the Critical

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<sup>181</sup> Daniel Wallace, “Has God Preserved the Scriptures?,” online at <http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2007/08/has-god-preserved-the-scriptures-it-depends-part-2/#more-354> accessed 4 February 2009.

<sup>182</sup> Daniel Wallace, “The Greer Forum: A Few Observations,” online at <http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2008/04/the-greer-heard-forum-a-few-observations/> accessed 4 February 2009.

<sup>183</sup> William Combs, *DBSJ* 5 (Fall 2000): 44.

Text, it differs in at least a thousand places. It suffers from being based on the work of the textual scholar, von Soden who Frederik Wisse indicts by concluding that, “von Soden’s inaccuracies cannot be tolerated for any purpose. His apparatus is useless for a reconstruction of the text of the MSS he used<sup>184</sup>.” The MT is, therefore, essentially a collation of less than 10% of the extant documents.

Dan Wallace praises the MT advocates such as Wilbur Pickering for subduing his “theological invectives” and because his “theological presuppositions regarding preservation were also played down” and sneers that, unlike the TR advocates, Pickering is, “sane, reasonable, and thorough<sup>185</sup>.” The MT advocates have correctly sunk some holes in the CT battleship and men like Robinson have argued of Hort’s genealogical theory,

Possibility (which is all that was claimed) does not amount to probability; the latter requires evidence which the former does not. As Colwell noted, by an “a priori possibility” Westcott and Hort could “demolish the argument based on the numerical superiority urged by the adherents of the Textus Receptus.” The TR (and for all practical purposes, the Byzantine Textform) thus was overthrown on the basis of a hypothesis which was not demonstrable as probable.

The problem with such an approach is that it turns to scientific methods rather than scriptural pre-suppositions to guide the choice of texts and the same radical confusion of the CT advocates quickly arises. For instance, we are still left with the problem that when we count the extant manuscripts available, we are still unable to compare them with the total number of manuscripts ever written. Furthermore, we are still left with the perennial uncertainty of the CT advocates as we to date cannot factor

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<sup>184</sup> Frederik Wisse, *The Profile Method for the Classification and Evaluation of Manuscript Evidence as Applied to the Continuous Greek Text of the Gospel of Luke: Studies and Documents* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1982), 16-17

<sup>185</sup> Daniel Wallace, “Some Second Thoughts on the Majority Text,” online at [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=673](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=673) accessed 15 February 2009.

objectively into such calculations that 1,000 or more manuscripts critics like Daniel Wallace believes are still generally “lost” or not publicly accounted for. Kevin James pertinently observes,

While most existing New Testament copies have been roughly categorized into “majority” or “non-majority” groupings, the exact text of thousands of existing manuscripts is unknown except in a handful of places....It should be understood that it is impossible to prove which of two or more competing wording variations is the original since the originals have long since disappeared. But it is the height of folly to throw the settled received text of three and one-half centuries into the dustbin to make a revision when the exact contents of thousands of existing copies of mainstream tradition manuscripts is unknown<sup>186</sup>.

TR advocates base their arguments primarily from a Scriptural presupposition and not solely on the majority of manuscripts, although we recognise God preserving the true text essentially throughout the totality of the MT family of manuscripts (around 2% of the time the TR departs from the MT). This is because we believe that there are supernatural forces involved; one opposing its preservation and another promoting it and this must be factored into our thinking. We believe God promised to preserve His word, and actually did. Essentially, the difference between the CT and MT advocates is that one simply goes from dating pieces of paper to counting them. However, predicating your belief in numbers is in marked contrast to the Historic Reformed position of appealing to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture in respect of providential preservation. As the Trinitarian Bible Society explains,

Furthermore, as no detailed collation of all surviving manuscripts has taken place, the exact majority text cannot yet be determined; and even if one day that became possible, the resultant text could only be provisional and tentative, because the discovery of further manuscripts might change minority readings to majority readings, or vice versa. The doctrine of providential preservation, however, teaches

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<sup>186</sup> Kevin James, *The Corruption of the Word: The Failure of Modern New Testament Scholarship*, (Williamsburg: Micro-Load Press, 1990), viii, ix.



that the Church *is*—and always has been—in possession of the true text of Scripture<sup>187</sup>.

Another major problem the MT advocates have is that there are many occasions when they cannot know for certainty what the text is by their statistical models and have to resort to the “intrinsic and transcriptional probability” method of Hort to “guess” what the text should be. For instance, Moises Silva points out of Hodges and Farstad’s Majority Text, “in many cases the mss. in question were so deeply divided that it was impossible to come to a firm decision. In the Gospel of Matthew alone, they specifically noted over seventy passages that fall into this category<sup>188</sup>.” In the Hodges and Farstad text, they state of some manuscripts, “the rival variations were weighed both in terms of their distribution within the majority tradition as a whole and with regard to intrinsic and transcriptional probabilities. Occasionally a transcriptional consideration outweighs even a preponderance of contradictory testimony<sup>189</sup>.”

The major problem with the MT position is that ultimately they leave us without a certain text. In the *The Greek New Testament According To The Majority Text* it candidly confesses on the book jacket,

Scholarly discipline permeates the editor’s logic and conclusions; yet Hodges and Farstad make no claims that this text in all its particulars is the exact form of the originals.

On page x of the introduction we are told,

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<sup>187</sup> See definition of “Majority Text” in *Word List*, 9 online at <http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org/site/statement.pdf>. accessed 15 February 2009.

<sup>188</sup> Moises Silva, *Reformed Textual Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1990): 5

<sup>189</sup> Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), xxii

The editors do not imagine that the text of this edition represents in all particulars the exact form of the originals...it should therefore be kept in mind that the present work...is both preliminary and provisional.

So we are bound to ask, if Hodges and Farstad does not have the true text, the TR and the editions of the Critical Text does not have it then if after all these centuries we still have only a provisional, preliminary, tentative Bible; what are we to do? The presupposition is also somewhat flawed as one could use the same methodology to decide what is true Christianity by distilling the common denominator between all the “Christian” faiths. If we believe that this would not result in the true Christian faith, why do we think we will “recover” and “restore” the Scriptures with the same methodology? Dr Edward F. Hills explicitly rules out such a view,

Hodges, Pickering and Van Bruggen seem to think that this is possible, but in so thinking they are badly mistaken. The same thing must be said of them that has just been said of Dr. Warfield. In spite of their good intentions, their thinking is pointed toward modernism and unbelief. For if the providential preservation of the holy Scriptures is unimportant for the defense of the New Testament text, then it must have been unimportant for the history of the New Testament text and hence non-existent and not a fact. And if the providential preservation of the Scriptures is not a fact, why should we suppose that the infallible inspiration of the Scriptures is a fact? For inspiration and preservation go together.

Hodges and Pickering try to substitute their theory of statistical probability for Burgon’s doctrine of the special providential preservation of the Scriptures. According to these two scholars, statistical probability shows that whenever the transmission of an ancient book has been normal, the best text is found in the majority of the manuscripts. The transmission of the New Testament text has been normal. Hence the text found in the majority of the New Testament manuscripts is the best New Testament text.

In advancing this argument, however, Hodges and Pickering contradict themselves. For they both claim to believe in the providential preservation of the Scriptures, and if this providential preservation is a fact, then something is true of the New Testament which is not true of the transmission of other ancient books. Hence the transmission of the New Testament cannot have been normal. And even from a naturalistic point of view their argument is faulty. For the New Testament is a religious book, and the transmission of a religious book is never normal

because it is transmitted mainly by believers who do not regard it as a normal book<sup>190</sup>.

## VIEWS OF THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS BY ITS CRITICS

Even some of the most trenchant critics of the TR have accepted the historical fact of the TR only view as equated with that of historical orthodoxy. Henry Fox writing in 1875 accepts,

The Reformation, which threw open the floodgates of knowledge, gave a great impulse to the study of Hebrew and Greek; but it was long before the dust which centuries of neglect had accumulated over them could be cleared away....Hebrew scholarship was entirely in the hands of the Jewish rabbis, and the Masoretic or traditional text of the Old Testament Scriptures was regarded with superstitious veneration as absolutely perfect. There is not in all the annals of literature a more striking instance of credulity than the general acquiescence of the learned in that opinion. The rabbis boldly asserted, and the Christians implicitly believed, that the Hebrew text was free from error, and that in all the MSS. of it, not an instance of a various reading of importance could be produced<sup>191</sup>!

Kurt Aland the principal editor of the Nestle-Aland edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* writes, “Finally it is undisputed that from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century orthodoxy’s doctrine of verbal inspiration assumed this *Textus Receptus*. It was the only Greek text they knew, and they regarded it as the ‘original text.’”<sup>192</sup> Hort himself admits, “The fundamental Text of late extant Greek MSS generally is beyond all question identical with the dominant Antiochian or Graeco-Syrian Text of the second half of the 4th century<sup>193</sup>.” Barbara Aland writes, “Every Theologian of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and not just the exegetical scholars) worked from an Edition

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<sup>190</sup> E. F. Hills, “How Dr. Hills Became a KJV Believer” dated 1996 online at [http://www.fpcr.org/blue\\_banner\\_articles/efhillsa.htm](http://www.fpcr.org/blue_banner_articles/efhillsa.htm) accessed 16 March 2009.

<sup>191</sup> Henry Charles Fox, *On the revision of the authorised version of the Scriptures: With an Account of the Revision Now*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1875), 9.

<sup>192</sup> Kurt Aland, “The Text of the Church?” *Trinity Journal* 8 (1987):131.

<sup>193</sup> As cited by John Burgon, *Revision Revised*, (Collingwood: Dean Burgon Society, 1883), 257.

of the Greek Text of the New Testament which was regarded as the ‘revealed text.’ This idea of verbal inspiration (i.e. literal and inerrant inspiration of the text) ...was applied to the Textus Receptus” and “We can appreciate better the struggle for freedom from the dominance of the Textus Receptus when we remember that in this period it was regarded as preserving even to the last detail the inspired and infallible Word of God Himself <sup>194</sup>.”

Another critic, Merrill M. Parvis states, “The *Textus Receptus* is not the ‘true’ text of the New Testament,” but concedes, “It [the TR] was the Scripture of many centuries of the Church’s life. ... The *Textus Receptus* is the text of the Church. It is that form of text which represents the sum total and the end product of all the textual decisions which were made by the Church and her Fathers over a period of more than a thousand years.”<sup>195</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, accepts the Textus Receptus was “spread widely throughout Greek speaking lands,” that it was the text of the first translation of the Bible into Teutonic language, by Ulfilas, “apostle to the Goths,” in the second half of the fourth century. He also accepts that it was the text of the first translation of the Bible into a Slavic language, thus forming “the basis of the New Testament ... for millions of Slavic peoples.” He concludes,

As regards the history of the printed form of the Greek New Testament, the so-called *Textus Receptus*, which was based chiefly on manuscripts of the Antiochian recension (sic), has been reprinted, with only minor modifications, in almost one thousand editions from 1514 down to the twentieth century. When one considers how many translations into the vernaculars of Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America have been based on the Greek *Textus Receptus* of the New Testament (such as the King James version or Luther's translation), it will be appreciated

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<sup>194</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland. *The Text of the New Testament*, 9, 11.

<sup>195</sup> Merrill M. Parvis, “The Goals Of New Testament Textual Studies,” *Studia Evangelica* 6 (1973): 406.

how enormous has been the influence of Lucian's recension (sic), made in Antioch about the turn of the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era<sup>196</sup>.

The liberal historian, Jonathan Sheehan accepts, “There was, for Medieval Christians (and for many modern ones as well) essentially no reason to suppose that the text of their Bible was anything but identical with the Bible itself.<sup>197</sup>” Another, E. C. Colwell has admitted that those who are committed to the absolute authority of preservation will ultimately reject textual criticism,

It is often assumed by the ignorant and uninformed – even on a university campus – that textual criticism of the New Testament is supported by a superstitious faith in the Bible as a book dictated in miraculous fashion by God. That is not true. Textual criticism has never existed for those whose New Testament is one of miracle, mystery, and authority. A New Testament created under those auspices would have been handed down under them and would have no need of textual criticism<sup>198</sup>.

In the preface to the 1633 Elzevir publication of the Greek NT it states records, “*Textum ergo habes, nunc ab omnibus receptum: in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus*” (“What you have here then is the text universally recognized: we offer it free of alterations and corruptions”). Charles Hammond writes in 1884, “There have been other critics who seem to regard a deviation from the Textus Receptus as little else than a heresy, and assume that the cursive MSS., on which it is based, are the representatives of other early correct codices, now lost, of a different type from those early ones that now exist, but more worthy of consideration<sup>199</sup>.

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<sup>196</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1963), 27-30.

<sup>197</sup> Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture*, (Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>198</sup> E.C. Colwell, *What is the Best New Testament?*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), 8.

<sup>199</sup> Charles Edward Hammond, *Outlines of textual criticism applied to the New Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), Introduction, 2.

## CONCLUSION

It is axiomatic to even the most ardent critic of the KJV that the recovery of the “autograph text” is outside the possibility of recovery simply by a neutral Textual scientific methodology. Even the leading exponents of textual criticism candidly concede this. By eliminating God’s work of preservation, they have left the church disarmed, vulnerable and in total confusion. They are like those of old of whom God says in the last verse of the book of Judges “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg 21:25). The Lord promised He would simply “do wonders” to preserve his word (Josh 3:5) in taking the ark through the Jordan. He left no physical evidence that this miracle happened in the waters of the Jordan, yet Christ and the Apostles clearly had those Words in there day. In a similar manner, God does not necessarily leave tangible evidence of His providential preservation, yet we have all of the Words of God today.

These multi-versionists have no final authority, save for their own reasoning or a scholar to tell them what God probably said. Their infallible Bible is lost and they are desperate for you not to possess one either. They believe that the Bible emerged from a “big bang” and then it was lost. Since no unity is recognized, it follows that no authority will be either. Thanks to an evolutionary path which will culminate one day through liberal scholarship it may possibly theoretically reappear in the future, although they do not think so. However, God has promised preservation in the minutiae, and not simply in the main. Our Lord could not have said it any clearer in the three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke that, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall *not* pass away.” We say with the great Apostle, “Yea, let God be true, but every man a

liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged” (Rom 3:4).

Though the Bible is not exhaustive in setting forth every detail of the preservation of God’ Words, when and where it speaks, it speaks with God’s authority. This authority does not extend to all competing and contradictory theories of the mode and methodologies of preservation. We should never be tempted to surrender the clear promises of God’s Word (1 Cor. 4:6) amidst the capricious waves of textual critical theory. The Scriptures explicitly teaches that preservation is a work of God and offers no encouragement to those who seek a compromise with rationalistic textual criticism. There can be no question as to what God did, as He never acts contrary to what He promised. The Rev. Dr. Ian Paisley, Joint Chairman of the World Congress of Fundamentalists and Founder of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, shows the necessity of believing in preservation and inspiration,

There is no such thing as verbal Revelation without verbal Inspiration and there is no such thing as verbal Inspiration without verbal Preservation. In all cases it is not partial but plenary i.e. full, complete, perfect.

The Divine Revelation, put into writing the verbally Infallible Scriptures though Divine Inspiration, must have Divine Preservation in order to be available to all generations... If there is no preserved Word of God today then the work of Divine Revelation and Divine Inspiration has perished<sup>200</sup>.

Jack Moorman comments, “Therefore, it is the work of past inspiration which makes the Scriptures profitable in the present. And conversely, the Scriptures cannot be profitable in the present if the manifold blessings of inspiration have not been preserved<sup>201</sup>.” A Presbyterian 19<sup>th</sup> century writer correctly observes,

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<sup>200</sup> Ian R K Paisley, *My Plea for the Old Sword: the English Authorised Version (KJV)*, (Belfast: Ambassador, 1997), 102-3.

<sup>201</sup> Jack Moorman, *O Timothy* magazine, Volume 9, Issue 8, 1992.

No man can have a wordless thought, any more than there can be a formless flower. By a law of our present constitution, we think in words, and, as far as our consciousness goes, it is as impossible to infuse thoughts into the mind without words, as it is to bring men into the world without bodies<sup>202</sup>.

Professor Albert J. Hembd of Reformation International Theological Seminary who is textual consultant to the Trinitarian Bible Society also makes clear that the Words of God would be preserved through the true Church throughout all times,

The Byzantine text rightly gained the ascendancy and that permanently, thus manifesting itself to be the text that would be the Scriptures in the true Church's mouth, from generation to generation, even for ever, in accordance with the promise of Isaiah 59: 20–21. We have shown that the true text, the words of God promised in Isaiah 59: 20–21, would be that which would be in the mouth of the true Church, in the mouth of her seed and her seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever. Thus, any text that was obliterated and forgotten for 1,400 years cannot by Scriptural standards be the Providentially preserved words of God, because it was not the text that was in the Church's mouth, that is, in her profession and in her feeding upon it as it was being expounded from her pulpits from generation to generation<sup>203</sup>.

The Rev N. Pfeifer, speaking at the annual meeting of the Trinitarian Bible Society in 2008, is also unambiguous,

The Word has not been lost and refound in recent years; God has kept his Word down through the generations, to be realised in the Masoretic texts of the Hebrew Old Testament and in the Textus Receptus of the New<sup>204</sup>.

Even the contemporary agnostic textual critic, Bart Ehrman accepts the KJVO advocates are the only consistent group on preservation,

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<sup>202</sup> Cited in "Hints for some Improvements in the Authorized Version of the New Testament" by the late Rev James Scholefield in *The North American Review*, (1859): 198.

<sup>203</sup> Albert J. Hembd, "An Examination of the NKJV," TBS Quaterley Record, Issue Number: 581 – October to December 2007: 18-19.

<sup>204</sup> "The Believers' Love," *TBS Quaterley Record*, Issue Number 586 - January to March 2009: 9-10.



One cannot read the literature produced by the various advocates of the Majority text without being impressed by a remarkable theological concurrence. To one degree or another, they all (to my knowledge, without exception) affirm that God's inspiration of an inerrant Bible required [emphasis added] His preservation of its text<sup>205</sup>.

Ehrman also accepts the fallacious logic of those who argue that God was involved in preservation but this was just "general," as he argues, "If one affirms God's involvement in the transmission process in any way at all, is it anything but high handed to claim that He was generally, but not fully involved?"<sup>206</sup>

The disciples of Westcott and Hort have now for a century disturbed the Protestant world by making merchandise of the Church implicitly arguing that all along Rome has always been right. It is interesting to note that the latest United Bible Societies Text descended from the Westcott and Hort family boasts, "the new text is a reality, and as the text distributed by the United Bible Societies and by the corresponding office of the Roman Catholic Church (an inconceivable situation until quite recently) it has rapidly become the commonly accepted text for research and study in universities and church<sup>207</sup>." The United Bible Societies Vice President is Roman Catholic Cardinal Onitsha of Nigeria. On the executive committee is Roman Catholic Bishop Alilona of Italy and among the editors is Roman Catholic Cardinal Martini of Milan. Ecumenist, Patrick Henry happily claims, "Catholics should work together with Protestants in the fundamental task of Biblical translation...[They can] work very well together and have the same approach and interpretation . . . [This] signals a new age in

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<sup>205</sup> Cited in Wilbur Pickering, from a copy sent to him personally by Bart D. Ehrman: "New Testament Textual Criticism: Search for Method," M.Div thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1981, 40.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>207</sup> Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 35.

the church<sup>208</sup>.” In 1943 the Papal encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* encouraged a new ecumenically translated Bible as it said, “These translations [should] be produced in cooperation with separated brothers.<sup>209</sup>” Indeed, the Introduction in that Catholic Bible says,

In general, Nestle’s-Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Graece* (25th edition, 1963) was followed. Additional help was derived from *The Greek New Testament* (editors Aland, Black, Metzger, Wikgren) produced for the use of translators by the United Bible Societies in 1966<sup>210</sup>.

In 1924, the liberal paper *The Christian Century* was clear that “the Bible of the fundamentalist is one Bible: the Bible of Modernism is another<sup>211</sup>.” Today, we have now the same Ecumenical Greek Text for the modernist, liberal and Romanist Bibles. Just as Christ was hated by the world and despised by the conservative religious leaders in His day (Matt.12:14, 24, 15;12, 27:18), so the perfect Written Word is similarly attacked today. Indeed, a telling evidence for the truth of the TR can be seen by simply observing the text that the modern scribes envy, fear and mock the most. When once Protestants looked to the Received Text of the true Church as the final court of appeal in faith in practice they now look to Rome and apostates to adjudicate over what the Words actually are of the text. This is further exacerbated when we consider that Rome has a unenviable record of forging all kinds of historic positions and documents such as the “Pseudo-Isodorian Decretals” and the “Donation of Constantine.” We are being led by Rome and apostate text critics and scholars (Semler, Griesbach, Lachmann, Metzger

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<sup>208</sup> Patrick Henry, *New Directions in New Testament Study*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 232-234.

<sup>209</sup> *The New American Bible: Basic Youth Edition*, (Winona: Saint Mary's Press, 2005), Preface, 9.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 1054-1055.

<sup>211</sup> Charles Clayton Morrison, “Fundamentalism and Modernism, Two Religions,” *The Christian Century*, (Jan 3, 1924): 6.

etc.) in this “enlightened” approach to text criticism, which simply continued Rome’s agenda but under a different banner. Through these fifth columnist “allies,” Rome’s assault against the despised “Protestant Pope” has swept the field. Yet sadly so many Fundamentalists have embraced such a corrupted source as their “infallible rule of faith.”

Modern fundamentalism champions scholars and scholarship, or man’s wisdom, as being authoritative. No longer are God’s assurances sufficient evidence to warrant the certainty that we know what God’s Words are. Faith in the promises of preservation and availability is deemed irrational and intellectually irresponsible on the basis of supposed deficient attestation. The Christian faith is based upon the revelation of God, not the subjective and capricious opinions of men for as Paul said, “your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:5). We often discern the fulfillment of prophecy with hindsight and the almost five hundred years of providential blessing on the Words received by the Church is powerful evidence. However, if we believe that Scripture in its original languages is our final authority then, practically speaking, we should define that authority in terms of the apographs since we do not have the autograph originals. In our Reformation Bibles we hold in our hands the very “word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). This “liveth” and “abideth” defines both inspiration and preservation.

The final authority of modern textual criticism is a mystical, hypothetical, ever-mutating product of their subjective imagination. CT advocates perennially strive but never reach, a locus forever just out of our grasp. We now have accepted with liberals, such as Dean Inge, that the Church is now valued as expressing, “the common mind of Christian people” but it “has no accredited organ, and claims no

finality for its utterance<sup>212</sup>.” Protestant ministers and schools now tell the world the Reformation Bible is not to be trusted. Suspicion and uncertainty has entered into the precincts of God’s house concerning His Word. Reformed Theologian and CT advocate Robert Reymond typifies the confusion when one rejects the doctrine of perfect preservation,

The significance of the distinction between inerrant autograph and errant apograph may be seen from another angle. What difference would it make, some have asked, if the autographs did contain some of the errors that are present in the copies? Is not the end result of textual criticism and hermeneutics by both nonevangelical and evangelical essentially the same? As far as the results of textual criticism and hermeneutics as such are concerned, the answer to this last query is yes. By sound application of the canons of textual criticism, most by far of the errors in the text may be detected and corrected. And both nonevangelical and evangelical can properly exegete the critically established text. But the nonevangelical who fails to make a distinction between the inerrancy of the autographs and the errancy of the copies, after he has done his textual criticism and grammatical-historical exegesis, is still left with the question, Is the statement which I have now reached by my text-critical work and my hermeneutics true? He can only attempt to determine this on other (extrabiblical) grounds, but he will never know for sure if his determination is correct. The evangelical, however, who draws the distinction between inerrant autograph and errant apograph, once he has done proper text-critical analysis which assures him that he is working with the original text and properly applied the canons of exegesis to that text, rests in the confidence that his labor has resulted in the attainment of truth<sup>213</sup>.

By his appeal to naturalistic textual critical principles derived from the reason of the autonomous man, Reymond finds himself in a logical fallacy. He can have no certainty that he “is working with the original text” and as a consequence can have no “confidence that his labor has resulted in the attainment of truth.”

The Roman Catholic *Dublin Review* could not hide its delight at the Revised Version finally destroying *Sola Scriptura*, when they sneered,

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<sup>212</sup> L. Elliott-Binns, “Evangelicalism,” in *The Church and the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Libraries Press, 1956), 371.

<sup>213</sup> Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 91-92.

The “Bible-only” principle is proved false. It is now at length too evident that Scripture is powerless without the [Catholic] Church as the witness to its inspiration, the safeguard of its integrity, and the exponent of its meaning. And it will now be clear to all men which is the true church, the real Mother to whom the Bible of rights belongs<sup>214</sup>.

Roman Catholic Bishop, Henry Grey Graham also mocks,

Pious Protestants may hold up their hands in horror and cry out, “there are no mistakes in the bible! it is all inspired! it is God’s own book?” Quite true, if you get God’s own book, the originals...These, and these...only, were inspired...The original Scripture is free from error, because it has God for its author; so teaches the Catholic Church...but that does not change the fact that there are...thousands of differences in the old manuscripts..and I should like any enquiring Protestants...to see if they can possibly reconcile it with their principle that the Bible alone is the all-sufficient guide to salvation. Which Bible? Are you sure you have got the right Bible?...You know...that you must trust to some authority outside of yourself to give you the Bible...We Catholics...glory in having some third party to come between us and God, because God Himself has given it to us, namely, the Catholic Church, to teach us and lead us to Him<sup>215</sup>.

The Reformers broke free from Rome under the purity of the text, and now many are capitulating thither under the pretence of their corruption. Rome has seduced the Reformed Church back to its Tridentine presupposition. By definition, the supposed *variants* are those readings which differ from this Reformation text. Rome deliberately utilized the existence of variants to try to overthrow the Reformers’ claim that they had a sure word of prophecy, which did not need either interpretation or validation by Roman authority. By using this line of reasoning, the Reformation succeeded and the Reformed churches prospered. This allows Rome and the cults today to authoritatively select texts and readings at random and indiscriminately from the Received Text tradition with no prior consideration as to whether they were in public use. Laodicean Christians might favour the new versions, but the Holy Spirit’s providential blessing has

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<sup>214</sup> “The revision of the New Testament,” *Dublin Review*, VI, (July-October, 1881): 144.

<sup>215</sup> Henry Grey Graham, “Where We Got the Bible,” 1924, 64-65 as cited in Theodore Letis, *The Ecclesiastical Text*, 55-56.

not followed. Modern textual criticism is headed up by those committed to advancing the liberal and ecumenical agenda. A typical ecumenical approach is seen in the recent comments on his blog by Dallas Theological Seminary professor and leading Textual Critic expert, Daniel Wallace,

On the flight back from Athens last week, I sat in front of a gregarious Irish gentleman...This gentleman affirmed a lot of my most precious beliefs: Jesus Christ, the theanthropic person, died for our sins and was bodily raised from the dead; by putting our faith in him we are saved indeed, we are saved exclusively by God's grace; there's nothing that we can bring to the table to aid in our salvation. The good doctor called himself an evangelical. And he also called himself a Roman Catholic.

To some evangelicals, as soon as they hear that one is a Roman Catholic that immediately excludes such a person from the Pearly Gates. To some Catholics, once they hear that a person is an evangelical, they have the same posture. I wonder if part of the reason for this black-and-white view of salvation is due to a radical, unreflective commitment to one's tradition. I am a Protestant and an evangelical. I used to think that if someone did not fit within those two labels, he was eternally damned. But part of my reasoning was that since I thought that the evangelical faith was 100% correct, any deviation from it was 100% wrong. The problem with that approach is that many other Christian groups believe in a lot of what evangelicals believe. Obviously, I can't say that someone who believes in the bodily resurrection of Christ is 100% wrong! Yet, the three major branches of Christendom all embrace the truths that Jesus Christ is fully God, that he died for our sins, that he was raised from the dead, and that we are saved by God's grace alone through faith. There's so much right with other groups that it's impossible to claim that they're all wrong!

As I suggested in my last blog, I'm questioning some of the tenets of Protestantism and evangelicalism. That doesn't mean that I'm questioning the whole thing; I still believe that the evangelical faith is the best expression of genuine Christianity today. But I also believe that it is flawed and that we can learn from Catholics and Orthodox. And just as it is possible for someone to be saved and be an evangelical, I think it's possible for someone to be saved and be a Catholic or eastern Orthodox. So, I'm still at least 51% Protestant (and Luther is still a hero of mine), but I have no qualms criticizing my own tradition and exploring what we can learn from others<sup>216</sup>.

In our supposed postmodern age which opposes certitude of truth and morality the "buffet style" approach to the true text will lead the churches back to Rome

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<sup>216</sup> Daniel Wallace, "51% Protestant," online at [www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2009/02/1673/](http://www.reclaimingthemind.org/blog/2009/02/1673/) accessed 20 February 2009.

and finally to the certainty of the authority of the antichrist. By moving the locus of inspiration *away* from the Received Text of the true Church that has been affirmed in the Confessions as authentic and providentially tested, Rome and the world mock at those who profess *infallible* truth from what they claim is a *fallible* book. As David Norris laments, “One of the most evil effects of the proliferation of modern bible versions, each one claiming to be more authentic than the last, is that the single standard by which we can identify deceivers has been cast aside<sup>217</sup>.” He correctly observes,

No one’s life is going to be radically changed by reading a corrupted version of Shakespeare, but relying on a corrupted version of God’s Word has eternal consequences. When the meaning of a verse hangs on a single word or even a single letter, we cannot afford to have an unsure and approximate text. The Bible is not a text penned in the heat of literary and human inspiration, but it was given in words carried into the minds of its human authors on the breath of God, and then written by that same breathing into holy pages. Why should we think that God would take such great care by a divine act of inspiration to secure the perfect recording of His every word, if at the last all is lost? The Word that God gave, He also keeps. Those who treat the text of God’s Word like a Shakespeare folio will end up with a text like Shakespeare, a probable text with no certainty at all. It must be obvious that all those, professed friend or patent foe, who treat the Bible as though it were a human text will be unable to give us any more certainty for the Bible than they can for any human book. This is completely inadequate<sup>218</sup>.

Conservative CT advocates would rather believe the history pieced together by mainly unbelieving textual critics than scriptural promises and the doctrinal statements of believers. It is amazing that Reformed believers who believe in the depravity of unregenerate man and the degeneration of man and the world system in general, have accepted that scientific rationalism and classical education has somehow “evolved” to the point where apostates and liberals are more qualified to translate God’s word today than in 1611. Rome has shown its ability to adopt Enlightenment thinking

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<sup>217</sup> David W. Norris, *The Big Picture: The Authority and Integrity of the Authentic Word of God*, (Cannock: Authentic Word, 2004), 204.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, 292.

such as on evolution in contradistinction to historic Reformed opposition. Michael Maynard makes a pertinent observation in his work *A History of the Debate Over I John 5:7-8*, “Received Text advocates are still waiting for the fundamentalists minority text advocates to explain why they trust four liberals and a Jesuit, who is in line to become the next pope, with the identity of the New Testament<sup>219</sup>.” What a tragedy!

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<sup>219</sup> Michael Maynard, *A History of the Debate Over I John 5:7,8*, (Tempe AZ: Comma Publications, 1995), 329.